Family in Flavian Epic

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Family in Flavian Epic

Edited by

Nikoletta Manioti

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optimis parentibus Siluanoque

Nikoletta Manioti
St Andrews
January 2016

Notes on Contributors

Antony Augoustakis
is Professor of Classics at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, USA. His research interests include Latin imperial epic, Roman comedy and historiography, women in antiquity, classical reception, and gender theory. He is the author of *Motherhood and the Other: Fashioning Female Power in Flavian Epic* (Oxford 2010) and *Statius, Thebaid 8* (Oxford 2016). He is the editor of the *Brill Companion to Silius Italicus* (2010), *Ritual and Religion in Flavian Epic* (Oxford 2013), *Flavian Poetry and its Greek Past* (Brill 2014), *Oxford Readings in Flavian Epic* (Oxford 2016), and co-editor of the *Blackwell Companion to Terence* (2013) and *STARZ Spartacus: Reimagining an Icon on Screen* (Edinburgh 2016). He has published numerous articles and book chapters on various topics of the literature and culture of Greco-Roman antiquity. He is the editor of *The Classical Journal.*

Neil Bernstein
is Professor in the Department of Classics and World Religions at Ohio University (Athens, OH), where he teaches Latin language and literature. He is the author of *Seneca: Hercules Furens* (Bloomsbury, forthcoming); *A Commentary on Silius Italicus, Punica 2* (Oxford, 2017); *Ethics, Identity, and Community in Later Roman Declamation* (Oxford, 2013); and *In the Image of the Ancestors: Narratives of Kinship in Flavian Epic* (Toronto, 2008). He has been a NEH Fellow at the National Humanities Center (Research Triangle Park, NC, 2011–2012) and a Fulbright lecturer at National Taiwan University, Taipei (2008–2009).

Federica Bessone
is Full Professor of Latin language and literature at the University of Turin. She studied at the Scuola Normale and the University of Pisa, and held research fellowships in Munich, Oxford, and Berkeley. She is the author of *P. Ovidii Nasonis Heroidum Epistula XII: Medea Iasoni* (Florence, 1997) and *La 'Tebaide' di Stazio. Epica e potere* (Pisa–Roma, 2011). She is co-editing with Marco Fucecchi *The Literary Genres in the Flavian Age: Canons, Transformations, Reception.* She has published on Augustan and Flavian poetry, Seneca, Petronius. She is a member of 'EuGeStA' (European network on Gender Studies in Antiquity), of the scientific committee of the homonymous electronic journal, and of "Rivista di Cultura Classica e Medioevale".

Emma Buckley
is Lecturer in Latin and Classical Studies at the University of St Andrews. She has published on Flavian epic, Senecan tragedy and its reception, and is co-editor (with Martin Dinter) of Blackwell's *Companion to the Neronian Age*. She is currently completing a monograph on Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*.

Peter Heslin
is Reader in Classics at Durham University. He is the author of *The Transvestite Achilles: Gender and Genre in the Achilleid of Statius* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) and *The Museum of Augustus: The Temple of Apollo in Pompeii, the Portico of Philippus in Rome and Latin Poetry* (J. Paul Getty Museum, 2015). He has a book on Propertius' relationship with Virgil and Greek myth forthcoming from Oxford University Press. He has written articles on the poetry and topography of Augustan Rome and on the Latin epic tradition. He is also the developer of Diogenes, open-source software for classicists.

Alison Keith
teaches Classics and Women's Studies at the University of Toronto. Her research focuses on the intersection of gender and genre in Latin literature, and she has written books on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Latin epic, and Propertius, and edited or co-edited volumes on the reception of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Roman dress, Latin elegy and Hellenistic epigram. She is currently completing a book on Vergil for IB Tauris in their series 'Understanding Classics'.

Joy Littlewood
is an independent scholar based in Oxford. Early research in the late 1970s led to three pioneering articles on Ovid's *Fasti* followed by a commentary on Ovid's *Fasti*, Book 6 (Oxford 2006), which formed a major part of a doctorate by published work, awarded in 2007. Since then she has worked almost exclusively on Flavian epic, completing commentaries on Silius Italicus' *Punica* 7 in 2011 and *Punica* 10 in 2016. In addition to conference papers and participation in a major German epic study directed by Christiane Reitz she is working on a new commentary on Silius' *Punica* 3, with Antony Augoustakis, which whom she is also editing *Flavian Campania: Proceedings of an International Conference held in Naples, September 2015*. She has undertaken to complete the fourth and final volume of Jim McKeown's monumental commentary on Ovid's *Amores*.

Nikoletta Manioti
is Leverhulme Early Career Fellow at the University of St Andrews. She studied at the Universities of Thessaloniki, Florence, Cambridge and Durham, where

she wrote her PhD thesis on "All-female family bonds in Latin epic". She is interested in epic, myth, Roman women and family, and ancient geography and maps. As well as preparing a monograph on sisters in Latin epic, she is currently working on a project titled "View from Above: Aerial Perspectives in Latin Epic".

Carole Newlands
is College Professor of Distinction in Classics at the University of Colorado Boulder. Her research interests include classical and medieval Latin literature and cultural and reception studies. She is the author of over forty articles on classical and medieval topics, and she has published several books on Ovid and Statius: *Playing with Time: Ovid and the Fasti* (Cornell University Press 1995); *Statius Siluae and the Poetics of Empire* (Cambridge 2002); *Siluae Book 2* (Cambridge Greek and Latin series 2011); *Statius: a Poet between Rome and Naples* (London 2012); *Ovid: Understanding Classics* (London 2015). She is also co-editor of the *Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Ovid* (Oxford 2014); *The Brill Companion to Statius* (Leiden 2015); and *Ancient Campania* (Illinois 2015). Her new work involves the role that translation of the Classics has played in the forging of Scottish cultural identity.

Claire Stocks
is Assistant Professor for Classics at Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Her research interests include Augustan and post Augustan epic, especially Flavian epic. She is the author of *The Roman Hannibal: Remembering the Enemy in Silius Italicus' Punica* (Liverpool, 2014) and co-editor of *Horace's Epodes: Context, Intertexts, and Reception* (Oxford, 2016). She is currently working on a monograph on the representation of Jupiter in Flavian Poetry and Culture and a co-edited volume (with Antony Augoustakis and Emma Buckley) on *Fides* in Flavian Literature.

Tim Stover
is Associate Professor of Classics at Florida State University (Tallahassee, Florida). He specializes in Latin literature, with a particular interest in epic poetry. In addition to articles on Lucretius, Vergil, Lucan, Valerius Flaccus, and Statius, he is the author of *Epic and Empire in Vespasianic Rome: A New Reading of Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica* (Oxford, 2012). He is also the co-editor, along with Laurel Fulkerson, of *Repeat Performances: Ovidian Repetition and the Metamorphoses* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2016). His current long term project is a book that examines the influence of Valerius' *Argonautica* on subsequent Flavian epic.

Family in Flavian Epic*

Nikoletta Manioti

Flavian epic offers a rich exploration of the family, and Flavian studies have embraced this accordingly, with a large number of publications including articles, chapters, and two seminal monographs.[1] The reader of the four surviving epics (Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, Statius' *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*, and Silius Italicus' *Punica*) will not be surprised to find in them scores of examples of filial piety, maternal concern and sisterly affection, parents lamenting the death of their children, brothers vying for succession and taking up arms against each other.[2] The myths of the Argonautic expedition, the war against Thebes, and Achilles' stay on Scyros treat such themes from their earliest appearance in literature and art.[3] At the same time, these poems consciously engage with an epic tradition which revels in these and similar myths, and consequently in depictions of families. Finally, not only Silius' historical poem, but also Valerius' and Statius' mythological endeavours are a product of their Roman, and specifically Flavian context, for which the family both as an institution and in its imperial manifestation has a central place.[4]

Family is an important feature in the life of epic heroes.[5] The very plot of the Homeric poems is motivated by a man's desire to be reunited with his wife and son (Odysseus' *nostos*) and another man's wish to reclaim the wife stolen from him and taken to a new city and household (the Trojan War). For the heroes, who often are descended from the gods by a single generation,

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* The editor of the volume wrote this introduction; applied a consistent format to all contributions; checked the whole manuscript for typos and other errors; added all cross-references between contributions; and prepared the index locorum and general index.

1 E.g. Augoustakis (2006); Newlands (2006); Bernstein (2008); Rosati (2008); Parkes (2009); Bernstein (2010); Augoustakis (2010b), (2012); Brescia (2012); Zissos (2012); Cowan (2014); Bernstein (2015); Gervais (2015).

2 Recent companions on the three Flavian poets include Heerink and Manuwald (2014); Dominik, Newlands and Gervais (2015); Augoustakis (2010a). On their interaction with Greek literature, see Augoustakis (2014); with each other, Manuwald and Voigt (2013).

3 On family in Greek myth, see Slater (1968); Patterson (1998); Boulogne (2007).

4 For an overview of scholarship on the Roman family, see Rawson (2011) 9–10. As she points out, the initial focus on law and class shifted in the course of the twentieth century to gender, to address in more recent years topics such as childhood and old age which resonate with contemporary audiences. See also n. 15 below for further bibliography.

5 See e.g. Patterson (1998) 44–69 on Homer and Hesiod.

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ancestry is everything.[6] They take pride in their parents' achievements and family heirlooms such as Agamemnon's sceptre (*Il.* 2.101–108). Sons look up to their fathers and aim to equal or even surpass them in glory; his peers expect Diomedes to be at least as brave as his father Tydeus (3.370–375), and before he left to take part in the war, Glaucus was famously admonished "always to excel and to be superior to others, and not to shame the race of [his] fathers", 6.208–209).[7] Both blood and marriage create alliances, and those bound by them do not hesitate to join in wars in faraway lands; simply by being Helen's suitors alongside him, the Achaean kings help Menelaus exact revenge on Paris for the insult on his marriage. The poems depict every possible variation of the household, from the immense palace of Priam, which includes apartments for his numerous children and their spouses, to Odysseus' family of three, excluding his father who lives alone in the countryside. Intrafamilial conflict is not unknown;[8] Phoenix chooses exile over giving in to anger and killing his father (*Il.* 9.447–480), and Agamemnon cautions Odysseus against trusting Penelope for fear of sharing his own fate at the hands of Clytemnestra (*Od.* 11.409–456). In the Theban cycle, likewise, a curse that is handed down through the generations accounts for Oedipus' patricide and incestuous marriage to his mother, her suicide, the enmity between their sons which results in their mutual killing, and the complete eradication of the Labdacid line.

The situation is similar with tragedy, in which female figures in their familial roles as mothers, daughters, sisters and wives, become even more prominent.[9] The myths are used as a ground on which to experiment with issues affecting the *polis*, a microcosm of which is the family.[10] With Hellenistic epic, the expansion of the Greek world and the radical changes in political structures allow for the reworking of known myths and the families within them to give expression to new concerns.[11] Now politics becomes established as a feature of epic destined to reach its climax in Rome.

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6 On the use of this belief in the practice of kinship diplomacy, see Jones (1999), and on the use of kinship myth as a political tool, Patterson (2010).

7 On fathers and sons in the Homeric epics, see Wöhrle (1999); Pratt (2009); Wöhrle (2009); Petropoulos (2011).

8 On the conflict of generations in Homer, see Querbach (1976).

9 See e.g. Foley (2001).

10 On the family in Greek tragedy see Alaux (1995), Ormand (1999) and Belfiore (2000); in Greek and Roman comedy, Sherberg (1995); and on the conflict of generations in ancient drama, Baier (2007). On women's family roles in Roman Republican drama, see the essays in Dutsch, James and Konstan (2015).

11 On contemporary politics in Apollonius, see Mori (2008).

Latin epic, especially from Virgil onwards, reflects Roman beliefs and attitudes towards the family, as well as engaging with imperial ideology even when it is ostensibly mythological.[12] The imperial family is mentioned, addressed, or features outright in prophecies and visions of the future. Its historical and legendary ancestors are often the protagonists of the poems. Filial piety, loyalty to one's family, marital harmony, and the continuation of the line, are all ideals promoted in Roman culture which are also explored in Latin epic. Its treatment of intrafamilial conflict is particularly poignant for Rome as it evokes its legendary founding on an act of fratricide, and kin murder appears in Roman literature in general as a byword for civil war which characterises the state for much of its recent history.[13]

In the *Aeneid*, for example, the poet emphasises the continuity between Aeneas and Augustus, who is mentioned together with his adoptive father Julius Caesar both in Jupiter's prophecy (1.286–296) and in Anchises' description of the souls in the Underworld (6.788–807). Similarly, at the end of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Augustus is described in Jupiter's prophecy as gazing at his successors (15.834–837). Caesar himself, after his apotheosis, admits that his son is superior to him (850–851), and Augustus is included in a list of sons who were more famous and powerful than their fathers (855–860), culminating with Jupiter "to compare like with like" (857).

The Virgilian emphasis on the father-son bond between Anchises and Aeneas, Aeneas and Ascanius, but also Aeneas and Pallas who is entrusted in his care,[14] reflects not only the Roman son's reliance on his father for instruc-

12 On contemporary politics in Virgil's *Aeneid*, Cairns (1989), Stahl (1990), Quint (1993), White (1993), Stahl (1998), Thomas (2001), Powell (2008), and Miller (2009); in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Miller (2009) and Feldherr (2010); in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, Quint (1993) and Fratantuono (2012); in Valerius' *Argonautica*, Stover (2012); in Statius' *Thebaid*, Dominik (1994), Lovatt (2005), and Bessone (2011); in Silius' *Punica*, Marks (2005). See also McGuire (1997), Nauta (2002), Leberl (2004), and the essays in Dominik, Garthwaite and Roche (2009).

13 On fraternal *pietas* in Roman literature and culture, see Bannon (1997). On civil war in Latin literature, see Hardie (1993), Henderson (1998), and the essays in Breed, Damon and Rossi (2010).

14 On the father-son relationship in the *Aeneid*, see Lee (1979) and Tschiedel (1987). On motherhood in Augustan epic, see Fantham (2004–2005) on the *Metamorphoses*; McAuley (2012) on the *Aeneid* and the *Metamorphoses*; and McAuley (2015) on Virgil and Ovid (as well as Seneca and Statius). Stein (2004) examines women's roles as mothers, daughters and wives in Ovid, and Brescia (2012) treats sisters in Virgil, Ovid and Silius Italicus. On the relationship between husband and wife in the *Aeneid*, see e.g. Gutting (2006) and Sharrock (2013); and on the conflict of generations, Bertman (1976).

tion and financial support,[15] but also Augustus' rise to power through adoption by Julius Caesar,[16] his own concerns about succession,[17] and resort to adoption of his grandsons and stepsons.[18] Aeneas' marriage to Lavinia, decided by her father despite an earlier promise of her hand to Turnus,[19] is comparable to Roman marriages of alliance characteristic of the Late Republic and Early Empire;[20] Augustus himself divorced his wife to marry the better connected Livia even though she was married and pregnant at the time, and he orchestrated three successive marriages for his daughter Julia in order to provide the imperial family with a male heir.[21] When Virgil was writing his epic, family was already used to serve Augustus' political agenda,[22] as he honoured his sister Octavia and wife Livia with statues depicting them as chaste matrons.[23] After Virgil's death, the imperial family became omnipresent whether directly, e.g. on coins featuring Julia with her sons, the Ara Pacis, the Gemma Augustea;[24]

15 On fatherhood in Rome, see Hallett (1984), Dixon (1992); on motherhood, Dixon (1988), Petersen and Salzman-Mitchell (2012), and Keith and Sharrock (forthcoming); on children, Rawson (1991); Dixon (1992) 98–132; Rawson (2005), Dasen and Späth (2010), Laes (2011), Grubbs and Parkin (2013); on being fatherless, Hübner and Ratzan (2009). See also Dixon (2007) for a biography of the exemplary mother of the Gracchi, Cornelia.

16 Lindsay (2009) 182–189.

17 On Augustan succession, see the essays in Gibson (2013). Ancient sources include Tacitus (*Ann.* 1.3) and Suetonius (*Aug.* 63–65).

18 On adoption in Rome, see Kunst (2005), and Lindsay (2009); ibid. 190–216 on adoption in the imperial family.

19 This promise is viewed by both Amata and Turnus as effectively an engagement; e.g. Amata broods over "Turnus' marriage" (*Turnique hymenaeis*, *A.* 7.344), and reminds Latinus of Lavinia's "right hand, so often pledged to [their] kinsman Turnus" (*consanguineo totiens data dextera Turno*, 365), while Turnus vows to "destroy the accursed race that snatched away [his] bride" (*sceleratam exscindere gentem / coniuge praerepta*, 9.137–138). The gods, however, have actually forbidden such an engagement to take place (*sed uariis portenta deum terroribus obstant*, 7.58), and Faunus' advice to his son Latinus is clear: "do not trust the bridal chamber at hand" (*thalamis neu crede paratis*, 97). I thank the anonymous reviewer for this point.

20 On marriage in Rome, see Rawson (1991), Treggiari (1991), and Dixon (1992) 61–97.

21 On Livia and her relationship to her imperial family, see Barrett (2002); Burns (2007) 5–24. On Augustus' daughter Julia, see Fantham (2006).

22 On the use of the family in Augustan ideology, see Zanker (1988), Severy (2003), and Galinsky (2012).

23 On representations of Octavia and Julia, see Wood (1999) 27–74; of Livia, Bartman (1998); Wood (1999) 75–141.

24 See the discussions in Zanker (1988) 216–217, Severy (2003) 104–111, and Zanker (1988) 230–

or through their distinguished ancestors, both mortal (Aeneas, Romulus) and immortal (Venus, Mars, and ultimately Jupiter), in monuments such as the Forum of Augustus.[25] Family after all became synonymous with empire when Augustus received the title *pater patriae* in 2 BC,[26] evoking *pater Aeneas* in Virgil's epic,[27] but with the whole world to rule over and protect, as Ovid points out,[28] and consequently comparable to Jupiter.[29]

Both the Julio-Claudians and the Flavians followed Augustus in promoting family unity and succession through actions as well as visual ideology.[30] Agrippina featured in many statuary groups together with her husband, children, and other members of the imperial family;[31] coins were minted to celebrate the birth of heirs;[32] and Vespasian prepared Titus to succeed him by assigning him magistracies, sending him to wage wars on his behalf, and including him in his triumphs.[33] Ancient sources, however, also report scandals involving the imperial family, not all of which were mere rumours: from Julia's banishment

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232 respectively. On representations of the successors Gaius and Lucius, see Zanker (1988) 215–223; Tiberius, Drusus and Germanicus, ibid. 223–233. On children in imperial art, see Uzzi (2005).

25 Zanker (1988) 193–210.

26 See Sthrothmann (2000).

27 Occurring 18 times in the poem.

28 *auspicibusque deis tanti cognominis heres / omine suscipiat, quo pater, orbis onus*, *Fast.* 1.615–616; *iam pridem tu pater orbis eras*, 2.130.

29 *nec tibi grata minus pietas, Auguste, tuorum / quam fuit illa Ioui*, *Met.* 1.204–205; *Iuppiter arces / temperat aetherias et mundi regna triformis, / terra sub Augusto est; pater est et rector uterque*, 15.858–860; *hoc tu per terras, quod in aethere Iuppiter alto, / nomen habes: hominum tu pater, ille deum*, *Fast.* 2.131–132.

30 On the use of family imagery in imperial ideology after Augustus, see Kampen (2009).

31 For example, one on the Via Lata in Rome included the reigning emperor Claudius' brother Germanicus together with his mother Antonia, wife Agrippina the Younger, adopted son Nero, and two children from a previous marriage, Octavia and Britannicus. The statues do not survive but the inscription on the base of the monument names the members of the imperial family represented; see Ginsburg (2006) 84–85. On visual representations of the Julio-Claudian women, see Wood (1999) 142–314.

32 E.g. a sestertius minted by Drusus in AD23 to celebrate his twin sons, four years after their birth (*RIC* I^2. 97 no. 42) (Rawson (1997) 217).

33 Suet. *Tit.* 6; J. *BJ* 7.5.3; Domitian was also included in the triumph (Suet. *Dom.* 2; J. *BJ* 7.5.5). See Levick (1999) for a biography of Vespasian; Jones (1984) on Titus; Jones (1992), and Southern (1997) on Domitian; and Pfeiffer (2009) on all three emperors. On Vespasian's wife, Domitilla the Elder, see Levick (1999) 12–13; on Domitian's wives, Domitia and Flavia Julia (who was also his niece, as daughter of Titus), see Jones (1992) 33–40, and Burns (2007) 85–104.

by her own father for alleged adultery,[34] to Caligula's incest with his sisters and involvement in Tiberius' death,[35] to Nero's murder of his pregnant wife,[36] and Domitian's conspiracies against his father and brother.[37] It is not a surprise then that epics produced in the 1st century AD all deal with the family, but often problematize it more than their earlier counterparts.

On Friday 20th June 2014, six scholars of Flavian epic met at St Andrews to examine the theme of family in Valerius Flaccus, Statius, and Silius Italicus. Two months later, five more scholars joined the discussion, and the present volume began to take shape. *Family in Flavian Epic* is the latest in a series of recent works on Flavian epic which take into account the importance of family, but the first to offer a variety of approaches, cover all four poems, and stress in their representation of family bonds both the continuity with epic tradition and earlier Latin literature, and the links to contemporary Rome. The eight essays focusing on a single epic are arranged chronologically, starting with Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* (Stover, Stocks, Buckley), then moving on to Statius' *Thebaid* (Heslin, Manioti, Newlands) and *Achilleid* (Bessone), and finally Silius Italicus' *Punica* (Littlewood). The volume is rounded off with three essays which deal with overarching themes across more than one Flavian poem (Bernstein, Keith, Augoustakis).

The bond between fathers and sons, central in Homeric as well as Virgilian epic, appears as problematic in the poems of Valerius and Statius. As Stover shows, Jupiter's partial and nepotistic attitude towards his own sons in the *Argonautica* overshadows the efforts of other fathers such as Sol or Neptune,

34 On Julia's exile, mentioned in Tac. *Ann.* 1.3 and Suet. *Aug.* 65, see Bingham (2003); Cohen (2008).

35 Ancient sources on Caligula's relationship to his sisters: Suet. *Cal.* 24; J. *AJ* 19.204; D.C. 59.3.6, 59.11.1, 59.26.5; on his involvement in Tiberius' death: Tac. *Ann.* 6.50; Suet. *Tib.* 73; D.C. 58.28. For an assessment, see Winterling (2011), and Barrett (2014).

36 Poppaea's death is mentioned in Tac. *Ann.* 16.6 and Suet. *Nero* 35; on Nero's relationship to his wives Poppaea and Messalina, and his mother Agrippina, see Malitz (2005) and Barrett (1996).

37 Tac. *Hist.* 4.86 (Domitian against Vespasian); Suet. *Tit.* 9, *Dom.* 2 (Domitian against Titus); later Dio Cassius credits Domitian with his brother's demise (66.26.2), and tells of Titus on his death-bed regretting not killing Domitian when he had the chance (66.26.4). Titus is also presented as conspiring against his father (Suet. *Tit.* 5), and Domitia as being involved in the conspiracy that brought about her husband's death and the end of the Flavian dynasty (*Dom.* 14). On the relationship of our ancient sources to the Flavian emperors, see the essays in Dominik, Garthwaite and Roche (2009); on Josephus see also Edmondson, Mason and Rives (2007), Hollander (2014); on Pliny the Younger, Hoffer (1999), Winsbury (2014); on Tacitus, Pagán (2012); on Suetonius, Power and Gibson (2014).

whose monstrous sons nevertheless appear deserving of paternal affection. Similarly, in AUGOUSTAKIS' discussion of paternal lament, Statius' series of despotic fathers whose mourning outbursts for their dead sons fail to pass as genuine grief is in sharp contrast with Silius' Scipio and the positive outcome of his lament for his dead father.

A comparably varied perspective is offered on the father-daughter relationship. Medea faces a poignant dilemma in the *Argonautica* when she has to choose Jason over her father Aeetes, a choice that STOCKS sees as reminiscent of rebellious imperial daughters while at the same time serving the Flavian cause of the poem as a whole. Valerius' and Statius' versions of the Lemnian episode, in *Argonautica* 2 and *Thebaid* 5 respectively, present another opportunity to examine a daughter's piety, as both poets juxtapose Hypsipyle's devotion to her father Thoas to the crimes committed by the other Lemnian women against all male members of their families, including their fathers. AUGOUSTAKIS reads these episodes with a focus on their combination of lament and transgression of boundaries. At the same time, they contribute to the positive characterisation of Hypsipyle, in order to provide, according to STOCKS, a contrast to Medea later in the *Argonautica*, or, as HESLIN argues, to her attitude at Nemea later in *Thebaid* 5, where Hypsipyle's resistance to her modelling on Callimachus' Hecale leads to the conscious 'infanticide' of her nursling Opheltes.

A particularly interesting treatment of the parent-child bond is given in Statius' *Achilleid* with the two main parental figures, the foster-father Chiron and the biological mother Thetis, offering two different types of education, heroic and erotic, with origins in epic and elegiac models respectively, as BESSONE explains. Such use of non-epic material also has ramifications for the presentation of marriage in Flavian epic. Valerius injects Medea with her tragic future even before she takes up her role as a woman in love, BUCKLEY argues, and this, together with the poem's continuous emphasis on marital conflict, foreshadows the failure of Jason and Medea's wedding well before it takes place in *Argonautica* 8. For NEWLANDS, the appropriation of the elegiac motif of the abandoned heroine destabilises the marital relationships in the *Thebaid*, where the Roman ideals of conjugal harmony and piety are either impossible to achieve, as in the case of Atys and Ismene or Oedipus and Jocasta, or they bring about war and death, as in the case of Argia's love for Polynices.

As LITTLEWOOD's essay shows, Silius plays with the notions of fraternal concord and discord, the latter all too poignant for Rome, not only due to its foundation myth on fratricide but also its history of civil wars. In his presentation of Roman and Carthaginian brothers, the epicist does not hesitate to alter history in order to juxtapose unanimity (the Scipiones) to fraternal division (the Barcids). Statius' *Thebaid* also resonates with Roman concerns, and

images of discord extend from marriage to affect relations between siblings too. The conflict between Eteocles and Polynices which drives the plot of the epic inspires Silius' civil war imagery in the episode at Saguntum, which, Bernstein explains, is also presented as a victory of the Fury over Fides, but this time the latter is not free of negative associations. Fraternal conflict is counterbalanced in the Flavian epics by the portrayal of sisters who, in Keith's reading, are characterised by affection and loyalty; rivalry between divine sisters such as the Furies is used to achieve a common goal, whereas in the case of mortals Antigone and Ismene it mirrors their brothers' discord. This is in contrast to the united front presented by the sisters-in-law Argia and Antigone, based as they are on earlier models ranging from Homeric sisters-in-law to Roman epic sisters, as Manioti shows, until their alliance too falls victim to rivalry in the burial scene of *Thebaid* 12.

Alongside epic and other literary models, the fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of Flavian epic reflect attitudes and beliefs characteristic of the Roman family, whether ideal, legendary or historical. Medea behaves like a Roman *filia* (Stocks), Argia resembles Arria in her wifely devotion (Newlands), and filial loyalty and piety are expected by both Roman and Carthaginian sons in Silius' epic (Littlewood). The epics also convey specifically Flavian concerns such as the recent civil war experience (Bernstein), Vespasian's clemency towards his opponents (Stover), and the need for dynastic unity (Littlewood). For this reason the present volume will be useful not only to the student of Flavian epic, Flavian literature, and Flavian Rome in general, but also to anyone interested in the family and its various manifestations in Roman culture.

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Opibusque ultra ne crede paternis: Fathers and Sons on the Wrong Side of History in Valerius' *Argonautica*

Tim Stover

Introduction

Few critics nowadays would disagree with the assertion that Valerius' *Argonautica* is a thoroughly Romanized text that "takes on aspects of a cultural commentary"[1] or that it "uses traditional myth to comment on recent history".[2] In fact, recent studies of Valerius' *Argonautica* have revealed the extent to which his poem reflects the social and political pressures faced by the Roman elite in the early imperial period, something particularly evident in Valerius' narratives of kinship.[3] This paper seeks to build on these studies by focusing on fathers and sons in Valerius' epic and especially on those fathers and sons who can be dubbed 'history's losers', a focus that will nevertheless require some assessment of 'history's winners'.[4] In particular I analyze how Valerius' depiction of certain father/son pairs—Sol and Aeetes, Iapetus and Prometheus, Neptune and Amycus—reflects the tensions inherent in the rise to power of Vespasian and his sons, Titus and Domitian. Indeed, in response to Vespasian's unabashed promotion of Titus as his successor from the very beginning of his reign, in AD 71 a contentious debate was held in the Senate regarding the propriety of this dynastic arrangement.[5] The events of the recent past thus brought fresh anxiety about how best to determine succession, which, given the existence of Vespasian's adult sons, caused anxiety regarding the undeservedly exalted status and nepotistic promotion of the emperor's sons. My primary aim then is

1 Zissos (2003) 660.

2 Bernstein (2014) 156. For a recent historicizing reading of the poem, see Stover (2012). On the historical dimensions of the Argonautic myth and some of the uses to which it has been put, see Braund (1993) and Newman (2001).

3 See for example Davis (1990), Otte (1992), Zissos (2003), Bernstein (2008), and Ganiban (2014). On contemporary concerns reflected in Valerius' depiction of family bonds see also Stocks in this volume.

4 On lament as characteristic of father-son relationships in Flavian epic see Augoustakis in this volume.

5 See Levick (1999) 88–89 and Bernstein (2008) 19–20.

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to show that father/son figures offer a fruitful avenue for exploring further the manner in which Valerius' poem reflects the socio-political context in which it was produced, i.e. the reign of Vespasian in the aftermath of the civil war of AD 68–69.[6] The fathers and sons who find themselves on the wrong side of history in the *Argonautica* prompt Valerius' audience to ponder anew the effects of one family's rise to absolute power, a process that may have negative consequences for other, once prominent kinship groups. Valerius' text is thus reflective of the anxieties, tensions, and pressures inherent in the post-civil war acquisition of power by Vespasian and his two sons.

Sol and Aeetes

The thematic importance of a father's relationship to his son(s) is foregrounded early in the *Argonautica*. In a sequence that has no parallel in Apollonius' text, Sol approaches Jupiter shortly after the Argo has set sail in order to register a complaint with the king of the gods. Sol is opposed to the voyage's goal—the retrieval of the Golden Fleece—because the mission's success will bring trouble for his son Aeetes, king of Colchis:[7]

> 'summe sator, cui nostra dies uoluentibus annis
> tot peragit reficitque uices, tuane ista uoluntas?
> Graiaque nunc undis duce te nutuque secundo
> it ratis? an meritos fas est mihi rumpere questus?
> hoc metuens et nequa foret manus inuida nato,
> non mediae telluris opes, non improba legi
> diuitis arua plagae—teneant uberrima Teucer
> et Libys et uestri Pelopis domus—: horrida saeuo
> quae premis arua gelu strictosque insedimus amnes.
> cederet his etiam et sese sine honore referret
> ulterius, sed nube rigens ac nescia frugum
> stat super et nostros iam zona reuerberat ignes.
> quid regio inmanis, quid barbarus amnibus ullis
> Phasis et auersis proles mea gentibus obstat? …
> flecte ratem motusque, pater, nec uulnere nostro

6 My views on the date of Valerius' epic are set out fully in Stover (2012) 7–26.

7 Citations of Valerius come from the editions of Liberman (1997) and Liberman (2002). Translations of passages from *Argonautica* 1 are taken from Zissos (2008). All other translations are my own.

aequora pande uiris: ueteris sat conscia luctus
silua Padi et uiso flentes genitore sorores.'

V. Fl. 1.505–518, 525–527

"Supreme begetter, for whom as the years go round our daylight completes and renews so many alternations, is this your will? Does the Greek vessel move through the waves under your guidance and with your favoring nod? Or may I give vent to just complaints? Fearing just this and lest an envious hand be moved against my son, I chose not the wealth of a middle land and the vast fields of a rich region (let Teucer and the Libyan and the house of your own Pelops possess the most fruitful places): we settled upon bristling fields that you oppress with bitter frost, and upon frozen rivers. And he would cede even these lands and withdraw yet further without honor—but beyond there lies only a region dense with clouds and inhospitable to crops, which repels our rays. How can this terrible region, how can barbarous Phasis be an offence to any rivers or my offspring to peoples so remote? … Deflect the ship and its course, Father, and do not open the sea for these men to my harm; it is enough that the woods of the Padus know of my old grief, and the sisters who weep when they look upon their sire."

In addition to claiming that he has tried to locate his son in places so remote and so harsh as to be uninviting for Jupiter's offspring (*uestri Pelopis domus*, 512), Sol appeals to the sadness he endured when he previously lost another son, Phaethon (526–527). Thus Sol's opposition to Argo's mission is framed in decidedly personal—and indeed paternal—terms.[8] For him, the opening up of the seas that is to be triggered by Argo's maiden voyage will have dire consequences for his son Aeetes; and an injury to the son is an injury for the father (*nec uulnere nostro / aequora pande uiris*, 525–526). Sol and sons have been on the wrong side of history before and Argo's voyage threatens to put them on the wrong side of history yet again.

The historical significance of the voyage takes center stage as a direct result of Sol's appeal to Jupiter to stop the voyage and thus protect his son. Sol's words prompt a response from Jupiter that begins by addressing the specific issues raised by Sol, but then evolves into a sweeping declaration of Jupiter's designs for world history. Understandably, the announcement of Jupiter's *Weltenplan*

8 Note too that Sol stresses Jupiter's own role as a father by referring to him as *sator* (505) and *pater* (525), although Jupiter is not Sol's actual father (on which more below).

has received a great deal of attention.[9] My discussion of it here is limited to how Jupiter's speech addresses the issue of favoritism raised by Sol. Jupiter's words are carefully crafted to allay fears that the new age he is ushering in with Argo's voyage (1.498–500) is one that will be marked by rampant nepotism.[10] However, Jupiter's claims of impartiality are hard to square with subsequent developments in the text: after hearing them, Sol would still have had legitimate reasons for concern.[11]

Jupiter begins his reply to Sol with the following words:

> tum genitor 'uetera haec nobis et condita pergunt
> ordine cuncta suo rerumque a principe cursu
> fixa manent (neque enim terris tum sanguis in ullis
> noster erat cum fata darem iustique facultas
> hinc mihi, cum uarios struerem per saecula reges) …'
>
> V. Fl. 1.531–535

> Then the father replied: "All these things were established by me long ago; they are unfolding in their predestined order and remain unalterable from the world's original course. No stock of mine existed in any lands when I ordained the course of Fate: whence my ability to be just when I arrayed the various kings through the ages. …"

Here Jupiter tries to assure Sol that the new world order he is inaugurating is not marked by his showing favoritism to his own sons to the detriment of other sets of fathers and sons, such as Sol and Aeetes. He does this by making two primary claims. On the one hand, everything that is going to occur as history marches on has been long since established and set: there is thus an unalterable fixity at work in the unfolding of events (531–533). Jupiter would thus appear to be unable to fulfil Sol's request to stop Argo's voyage, even if he wanted to. On the other hand, Jupiter emphasizes the impartiality of his plan for the world by claiming that when he wrote the 'book of destiny' all those years ago, he

9 See Adamietz (1976) 21–24, Schubert (1984) 22–44, Feeney (1991) 319, Wacht (1991), Manuwald (1999) 138–153, Stover (2012) 27–77, Criado (2013), Manuwald (2013) 48–51, and Ganiban (2014). A wide-ranging discussion of divine plans and their communication to humans (or lack thereof) is offered by Manuwald (2009).

10 See Zissos (2008) 315.

11 On Jupiter's partisan sympathies both for the Argonauts generally and for his Argonautic sons specifically, see Otte (1992) 84, Stover (2012) 37 n. 36, Manuwald (2013) 37, 41–42, and Bernstein (2014) 163.

did not have any offspring on the earth for whom he scripted the best parts to play (533–535). Consequently, Jupiter cites the existence of a principle of extra-familial justice (*iusti … facultas*, 534) as a defining feature of his new regime.[12] But there are problems with each of these claims, and these problems emerge most clearly in scenes that recount Jupiter's interactions with his sons. I shall begin by discussing the second of these problems, namely the issue of Jovian nepotism vis-à-vis his sons. For Jupiter's claim of impartiality is immediately problematized.[13]

Directly after announcing how history is set to unfold, Jupiter turns to Hercules, Castor, and Pollux and addresses them directly:

> 'tendite in astra, uiri: me primum regia mundo
> Iapeti post bella trucis Phlegraeque labores
> inposuit: durum uobis iter et graue caeli
> institui. sic ecce meus, sic orbe peracto
> Liber et expertus terras remeauit Apollo.'
>
> V. Fl. 1.563–567

> "Strive for the stars, heroes. It was only after the battles with fierce Iapetus and the labors of Phlegra that royal power set me supreme over the universe. For you I have made the skyward path hard and toilsome. Only so did my Liber, having traversed the globe, only so did Apollo, having experienced life on earth, return to heaven."

Now although it is possible, perhaps even desirable, to understand these lines ultimately as an invitation for all of humanity to stake a claim for itself in the new Jovian age,[14] the passage's relationship to its specific context is instructive, and most likely troubling for Sol. As Randall Ganiban has recently demonstrated, Jupiter's reference to his victory over the Titans emphasizes that his rise to power came precisely at the expense of older gods like Sol, a Titan whose

12 On these lines, see the excellent discussion of Otte (1992) 14 and 56.

13 So too is Jupiter's assertion that history must unfold according to an unalterable plan, which is seemingly contradicted by his own words later in this same speech. At 1.555–560 Jupiter states that in the future he will "test" (*experiar*, 559) nations in order to determine to whom he will grant hegemony. But if this is an open question, the progress of history cannot be fixed from the outset, and one is left wondering what the criteria will be for Jupiter's "favoring" (*fouebo*, 555) of one people over another. On the moral uncertainty that arises from this apparent contradiction, see Ganiban (2014) 260. See also Criado (2013) 203–205.

14 See Otte (1992) 12, 57–58, 64 and Stover (2012) 52–53.

powers and prerogatives as god of the sun were traditionally eclipsed by a son of Jupiter, i.e. Apollo (whose name pointedly brings Jupiter's remarks to a close).[15] Indeed, Sol's 'Titanic' pedigree is an interesting aspect of this narrative sequence and one of the ways in which Valerius has radically altered his primary model, namely Venus' appeal to Jupiter in *Aeneid* 1.[16] For whereas Venus addresses Jupiter from the privileged position of being the king's daughter, Valerius' Sol is on the outside looking in, as it were: not only is he not Jupiter's son—a fact paradoxically highlighted by his usage of *sator* (505) and *pater* (525) to refer to him—but given how Jupiter rose to dominion his Titanic heritage puts him and his offspring in a precarious position. The insecurity of Sol's position in the new Jovian age is reflected in the obsequious manner in which he addresses Jupiter.[17] His subservience contrasts strongly with the moment when the Homeric Helios complains bitterly to Zeus that his cattle have been eaten by the Greek sailors (*Od.* 12.374–388), a passage often overlooked as a model for this Valerian episode. Homer's Helios is anything but meek: he has enough authority to threaten Zeus, saying that if the wrong done to him is not avenged he will remove the sun's light from the upper world.[18] Valerius' Sol makes no threats. In fact, his opening words to Jupiter signal the total absence of the Homeric Helios' bargaining power. Whereas Helios could threaten to remove sunlight from the earth, Sol's celestial operations are carried out for Jupiter (1.505–506): *summe sator, cui nostra dies uoluentibus annis / tot peragit reficitque uices*.[19] Clearly the Valerian Sol lacks the power and privilege of the Homeric Helios, and this change points up the remarkable *auctoritas* ascribed to Jupiter in Valerius' *Argonautica*. The power differential between Sol and Jupiter has consequences for the prospects of their sons. The only way Valerius' Sol can get some measure of recompense for the death of one son (Phaethon) is to beg Jupiter to spare another (Aeetes). Meanwhile, Jupiter's sons are offered by their father a "pathway to heaven" (*iter ... caeli*, 565). So although Jupiter claims that his agenda is predicated on a principle of justice that is divorced from familial connections, in practice the new world order ushered in by Argo's voyage offers better prospects for some than others.[20] One family's pathway to heaven is another family's trail of tears.

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15 See Ganiban (2014) 254, 267.

16 On Valerius' relations to the Vergilian model, see Kleywegt (2005) 289–290, Galli (2007) 271–272, and Zissos (2008) 305.

17 See Ganiban (2014) 255–256.

18 On Helios' beef with Odysseus, see Gantz (1993) 30–31.

19 See Kleywegt (2005) 299 who glosses *cui* here as "in whose service".

20 See Castelletti (2014) 190–191.

Given the importance of Argo's mission for the inauguration of the new Jovian regime Jupiter is heavily invested in its success. His political investment in the voyage is complemented by a personal dimension: the voyage has also been orchestrated as a means for Jupiter's sons to attain glory. Consequently, and perhaps not surprisingly, Jupiter is far less impartial than he claims to be when answering Sol's appeal.[21] Within the thematic economy of Valerius' *Argonautica*, to oppose Argo's voyage is tantamount to opposing Jupiter and his sons, i.e. to opposing the new dynastic arrangement.[22] The narrative is not shy about the fact that this arrangement is more beneficial for some than others, as we have seen. Whether this is construed as a good thing or not remains to be seen.[23] An examination of the boxing match between Pollux and Amycus will help us begin to answer this question. But first I want to look at the episode that immediately precedes this one, namely the discussion on Olympus concerning the liberation of Prometheus. This passage problematizes Jupiter's assertion that the unfolding of history is fixed and unchangeable, and it does so while yet again foregrounding the deleterious effects of Jupiter's rise to power on another family.

Iapetus and Prometheus

As with the encounter in Book 1 between Sol and Jupiter, Valerius' linking of the Argonautic voyage and the liberation of Prometheus is a striking innovation. Whereas in Apollonius the Argonauts hear the torments suffered by Prometheus as they pass by Caucasus (2.1246–1259), Valerius' Jupiter sends Hercules to free Prometheus from his imprisonment (5.154–176).[24] Jupiter's decision to release Prometheus is made significantly earlier in the narrative, at the beginning of Book 4. Hercules has just been separated from the other Arg-

21 See Ganiban (2014) 263–265. The Valerian Jupiter's championing of his offspring stands in stark contrast to the Statian Jupiter's desire to wipe out Thebes and Argos, despite the fact that the peoples of both cities descend from him (*Theb.* 1.224–226).

22 See Stover (2012) 81.

23 Since space does not permit a full discussion of Aeetes' character and how his behavior in the second half of the poem retrospectively shades Sol's impassioned defense of him here, let it suffice to say that Aeetes is portrayed as a treacherous and wicked tyrant who is not worthy of his father (see 5.455–458, with Spaltenstein (2004) 508). On Aeetes, see now the excellent discussion of Cowan (2014) 242–244.

24 On this episode, see Galinsky (1972) 164, Otte (1992) 81–83, 102–103, Zissos (2004) 331–337, Stover (2012) 168–169, and Buckley (2014) 322–324.

onauts by the machinations of Juno and is on the verge of making his way to Troy to claim his prize for saving Hesione, daughter of the Trojan king Laomedon (4.1–59). As in Book 1 when the gods in heaven behold Argo setting sail, here again the scene abruptly shifts from Hercules' terrestrial journey to Olympus, where the gods are watching the action. This time, however, it is not Sol who appeals to Jupiter, but rather Jupiter's son Apollo. As I noted above, given that Sol is traditionally supplanted by Apollo as god of the sun, the change from Sol to Apollo as the petitioner of Jupiter in these pendant passages is evocative, suggesting that already this shift in power from the Titan to the new ruler's son is being actualized.[25] Apollo has come to ask for Prometheus' freedom:

> ante Iouem stetit et supplex sic fatur Apollo:
> 'in quem alium Alciden, in quae iam tempora differs
> Caucaseum, rex magne, senem? nullumne malorum
> finem adeo poenaeque dabis? te cuncta precatur
> gens hominum atque ipsi iam te, pater optime, montes
> fessaque cum siluis orant iuga. sat tibi furtum
> ignis et aetheriae defensa silentia mensae.'
>
> V. Fl. 4.61–67

> Apollo stood before Jupiter and in supplication thus speaks: "Until what other Alcides, until what time indeed, great king, do you put off the old man of Caucasus? Will you grant no end at all of torments and of punishment? The entire human race begs you, the mountains themselves, best father, and the tired ridges along with their forests implore you. You have sufficiently punished the theft of fire and defended the secrets of the heavenly table."

Apollo's brief appeal to his father has been crafted for maximum rhetorical effect.[26] Not only does he highlight Jupiter's *auctoritas* and political clout (*rex magne*, 63), but he also reminds Jupiter that he is being asked for a favor by his son while simultaneously flattering him as a superlative father (*pater optime*, 65). Whereas Sol's usage of paternal terminology had the paradoxical effect of distancing him from Jupiter, here the familial connection is used by Apollo

25 The similarities between these two appeals to Jupiter derive largely from the fact that they each have as their primary model the scene in *Aeneid* 1 where Venus addresses Jupiter on her son's behalf.

26 See Murgatroyd (2009) 57–58.

to soften his father up in order to get from him what he wants. And whereas Jupiter denies Sol's appeal, he grants his son's wishes and does so in terms worth examining.

After Apollo has made his pitch to Jupiter, Valerius informs us that Prometheus himself begs the king for his freedom by crying out from his place of bondage (4.68–72). The chorus of voices asking Jupiter to remit Prometheus' punishment reaches a crescendo when, from the depths of Hell, Prometheus' father Iapetus cries out on his son's behalf (73–75): *tunc etiam superas Acheronte auditus ad arces / Iapetus; grauis orantem procul arcet Erinys / respiciens celsi legem Iouis* ("then also from Acheron up to the citadel on high the cry of Iapetus is heard; sternly does Erinys keep him at a distance while he begs, as she looks to the law of lofty Jupiter"). Here we are confronted with both a father and his son imprisoned by Jupiter for running afoul of the king: Jupiter's rise to power has clearly had a detrimental impact on this Titanic family. Indeed, the reference to Iapetus is pointed: it reminds us of one of the defining moments in Jupiter's rise to cosmic supremacy, the Titanomachy, which Jupiter himself describes as "battles with fierce Iapetus" (*Iapeti ... bella trucis*, 1.564).[27] It is partly due to his triumph over the Titans that Apollo is able to address his father as "great king" (*rex magne*, 4.63) and thus a primary reason why the king's subjects must respect the *lex Iouis*.[28] But although this Titanic father and son were each imprisoned by Jupiter, this was done for different reasons in each case. Iapetus, of course, fought against Jupiter in the Titanomachy. However, traditionally Prometheus was said to have aided Jupiter in this war, but to have gotten into trouble afterward by championing the causes of humanity too vigorously, an issue alluded to in Apollo's reference to Prometheus' theft of fire (66–67).[29] Although the reference is not entirely clear, the second reason Apollo cites for Prometheus' punishment is that he betrayed Jupiter's trust, using his proximity to the king to disclose something that he was supposed to keep secret (*aetheriae ... silentia mensae*, 67).[30] Prometheus is described by Apollo as a traitor to the Jovian cause, one who has suffered enough, but a traitor nonetheless. The Valerian Prometheus is thus reminiscent of a character

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27 The name Iapetus further reinforces the connection between the appeals to Jupiter by Sol in Book 1 and by Apollo in Book 4, since these are the only two places in the narrative where this name is found.

28 On the *lex Iouis*, see Otte (1992) 81–82 and Murgatroyd (2009) 64.

29 On Prometheus' assistance during the Titanomachy, see Gantz (1993) 159.

30 For discussion of this cryptic phrase, see Korn (1989) 62–63, Spaltenstein (2004) 221, and Murgatroyd (2009) 61. Prometheus' revelation of Jovian secrets also connects him to Phineus, on which see Stover (2012) 168.

like the unscrupulous demagogue Antonius Primus, Vespasian's invaluable but untrustworthy general, about whom Tacitus says (*Hist.* 2.86.2): *pace pessimus, bello non spernendus* ("in peace he was the worst, but in war he was not to be rejected").[31]

But why would Apollo want this questionable political prisoner freed, what is Jupiter's reason for granting the pardon, and what does this indicate about the arbitrary nature of the *lex Iouis*?

Firstly, let us examine Apollo's role in all of this. It is initially puzzling that Apollo is the one to intercede on Prometheus' behalf, since traditionally there was not a strong connection between these two characters.[32] But as Paul Murgatroyd has demonstrated, Apollo is not motivated by mercy for Prometheus.[33] Rather he is motivated by his desire to divert Hercules from Troy, a city beloved by Apollo and one destined to be sacked by Hercules due to the impending treachery of Troy's tyrannical king Laomedon.[34] It is thus only when Hercules begins making his way to Troy (4.58–59) that Apollo intervenes to reroute the hero to the Caucasus. Apollo's self-interested motives contrast sharply with the genuine sympathy felt for Prometheus by Hephaestus in *Prometheus Bound*. Apollo's ostensibly heartfelt appeal to his father is thus an act of dissimulation, one that plays out precisely as we are reminded of Jupiter being duped in the past by the cunning machinations of Prometheus![35] Consequently Apollo uses the access to Jupiter granted to him by his status as the king's son in order to carry out his own agenda, one that here entails delaying the ultimate sack of Troy, which is a key component of his father's *Weltenplan* (1.546–554). Apollo may enjoy more influence with Jupiter than Sol, the Titan whom he is destined to surpass as god of the sun, but his actions here are subversive, even 'Titanic', as it were. The fact that Jupiter can be so easily manipulated by his son is troubling, and calls for brief comment.

If Apollo is motivated by his own political agenda, what is Jupiter's rationale for releasing Prometheus? As we saw with Apollo, we can say that Jupiter too is not primarily swayed by pity for Prometheus or by his desire to placate humanity (4.64–65), Prometheus' principal beneficiaries. Rather, he is primarily persuaded by the enormous esteem he feels for his son Apollo (75–76): *ille … / … magno Phoebi commotus honore* ("he was moved by the great esteem he had

31 On Primus, see Ash (1999) 147–165 and Morgan (2006) 192–193.

32 But see Zissos (2004) 335 n. 69 for some indications of a connection between them.

33 See Murgatroyd (2009) 55–56.

34 On Laomedon (and other Valerian tyrants), see Cowan (2014).

35 On the thematic importance of dissimulation in Valerius' poem, see Hershkowitz (1998) 242–274.

for Apollo").[36] That is, Jupiter is moved not by any of the things Apollo actually says, but rather by the fact that *it is Apollo who is saying them*.[37] It is the personal connection of the father and son, the *amicitia* that they share, that is the deciding factor in this successful appeal to the king. The episode thus reflects a political system in which a personal, and indeed familial, connection to the king offers advantages and privileges that are lacking for those outside the royal family: the *magnus honor* Jupiter grants to Apollo contrasts sharply with the lack of *honor* governing Jupiter's treatment of Aeetes according to Sol (*sine honore*, 1.514). Moreover, there is a certain amount of arbitrariness reflected in Apollo's successful petition, given that Jupiter is not persuaded by moral or ethical concerns, but rather by the amount of respect accorded to the petitioner. Who you are seems to matter more than what you stand for.

In addition to depicting a system 'rigged' in favor of the king's son(s), the result of Apollo's successful appeal to Jupiter serves to benefit yet another one of Jove's sons. This is so because when Jupiter sends Iris down to inform Hercules that he is to "free the Titan from the dire bird" (*eripiat dirae Titana uolucri*, 4.79), the "commandments of his father" (*parentis / imperia*, 80–81) make Hercules "happy" (*alacrem*, 81). Hercules is happy because he will be able to win even more renown by means of this glorious exploit;[38] this detail recalls Hesiod's *Theogony*, where Zeus allows Heracles to kill the eagle that tortures Prometheus so that his son can win still greater *kleos* (*Th*. 526–532). The chain of events set in motion by the honor accorded to one of the king's sons, Apollo, leads directly to the further aggrandizement of still another of the king's honored sons, Hercules. When it comes to the workings of the *lex Iouis* then, Jupiter's sons have a great deal of influence, and this in turn can be used to manipulate the system to their own benefit. Is this not precisely the sort of favoritism that Jupiter abjured in Book 1? Does Jupiter's sudden decision to release Prometheus also contradict his assertion that the *fata* have been decreed and fixed once and for all? Does this sequence in Book 4 suggest that when Jupiter's sons are involved, there is a different set of rules, and that what Jupiter says to Sol in Book 1 is designed to conceal the reality of the *lex Iouis*, i.e. that it is in fact nepotistic and arbitrary, that it is applied based not on any recognizably consistent moral principles, but rather on the amount of esteem accorded to the persons involved in any particular case?

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36 See Spaltenstein (2004) 224. Jupiter also acquiesces partly because he wants Latona and Diana, who are present, to stop crying (*dearum / fletibus*, 75–76).

37 See Murgatroyd (2009) 64.

38 See Spaltenstein (2004) 225. See also Zissos (2004) 332: "For [Hercules] the deliverance of the Titan is his last and most important *aristeia* of the poem—a climactic curtain call."

And yet, despite the nepotistic mechanisms by which the pardon of Prometheus is achieved, the Titan is pardoned; something positive does come from Apollo's appeal to Jupiter. This is so because the liberation of Prometheus is a powerful symbol of restored freedom, one that gels with the *Argonautica*'s theme of technological development in the Jovian age while also suggesting for the king himself "a movement away from an initial despotism towards the embrace of human advance."[39] Indeed, earlier in the narrative Valerius suggests that Jupiter's reign was less secure when it was new (*regni … nouitate*, 2.83), which may account for his initial harshness. In this regard, the Valerian Jupiter recalls Tacitus' remarkable description of Vespasian, who managed to do something that no Roman emperor before him had done, namely to change for the better in the course of his reign (*Hist.* 1.50): *solusque omnium ante se principum in melius mutatus est* ("of all the emperors who came before him Vespasian alone changed for the better").[40]

Another way in which the Valerian Jupiter's character is positively enhanced in this episode derives from his exercising of *clementia*.[41] According to Seneca, it is the mark of a good king to set limits to his anger, a practice that ideally will lead him, when appropriate, to remit the punishments which criminals and wrongdoers deserve (*Cl.* 1.5.6.; 1.19.1–4). Moreover, this passage in Valerius' *Argonautica* dramatizes proper *clementia* also by having Jupiter offer pardon to Prometheus but not to his father Iapetus. As Seneca makes clear, *clementia* must not be exercised indiscriminately, but rather one must make distinctions between those who are curable and those who are not (*Cl.* 1.2.2). For Valerius' Jupiter, there can be no forgiveness for the father, Iapetus, who not only fought against Jupiter in the Titanomachy, but seems to have played an especially prominent role in the war against the eventual victors.[42] The case is different for Prometheus: although he is the son of a bitter enemy, his status as a onetime ally and his having sufficiently paid for his indiscretions against the king (4.66–67) make him eligible for *clementia*. As a result, the juxtaposition here of this father and son who have found themselves on the wrong side of history has important implications for our understanding of the *lex Iouis* (75). A proper usage

39 Zissos (2004) 338 n. 73. For other positive aspects of Prometheus' emancipation, see Stover (2012) 168–169 and Buckley (2014) 322–324.

40 See Stover (2012) 167–168.

41 Given Tacitus' assertion that Vespasian changed for the better during his reign, it is worth noting that Seneca claims a similar evolution for Augustus, whose initial cruelty was later offset precisely by means of the proper exercise of *clementia* (*Cl.* 1.9.1; 1.11.1).

42 See Gantz (1993) 40–41. For Valerius' recognition of this tradition, see Zissos (2008) 324 (on the phrase *Iapeti … trucis* at 1.564).

of *clementia* is a key component of this *lex*: for here Iapetus, an entrenched criminal who is beyond the pale, is to remain shackled in his prison house, but Prometheus, a criminal who can be brought back into the fold, has his penalty revoked. The differing fates of this father and his son thus illustrate the importance of *clementia* within the *lex Iouis*.[43] Jupiter's apparently sudden decision concerning Prometheus *is* the law, in a way that recalls Seneca's description of the supra-legal nature of *clementia* (*Cl.* 2.7.3).

Finally, we should not lose sight of still other issues regarding fathers and sons in this episode, such as those that emerge from the traditional importance ascribed to Prometheus' liberation for Jupiter's consolidation of power. Although Valerius does not refer to it explicitly here, Prometheus used his knowledge that Thetis was destined to have a son greater than his father in order to secure his freedom.[44] Once Jupiter heard this news, he arranged for Thetis to marry Peleus, thus ensuring that he would avoid the pitfalls of both Uranus and Saturn who were overcome and succeeded by their sons. This arranged marriage is prominently depicted on Argo's hull (1.130–133),[45] thus further linking Argo's voyage with Jupiter's consolidation of power as he inaugurates a new world order.[46] There is thus an important element of *Realpolitik* involved in Prometheus' liberation that should not be overlooked.

Before we move on to the sequence that follows Jupiter's decision to free Prometheus, i.e. the boxing match between Pollux and Amycus, perhaps we can historicize the formal features of the Valerian narrative we have been discussing. The episode's emphasis on the Titanomachy and its aftermath is suggestive of the post-civil war era in which Valerius composed his poem and of the issues facing the new dynast Vespasian. On the one hand, the Titanomachy, like the Gigantomachy, was employed as a model of civil war, and of the civil war of AD 68–69 in particular: Plutarch likens the battles of the so-called 'Year of the Four Emperors' in general to the Titanomachy (*Galb.* 1.4), while Statius equates the specific fighting on the Capitoline between Vitellian and Flavian forces with the Gigantomachy (*Silu.* 5.3.195–197). On the other hand, Valerius' epic too has

43 It is also worth noting the generational divide: the younger generation may be eligible for Jovian mercy, whereas the older, more entrenched figures of the previous generation are not. On this, see Otte (1992) 82–83.

44 There may be an oblique reference to this story in Apollo's usage of the phrase *pater optime* (4.65), which may be an allusion to the "story that Jupiter kept his supremacy because thanks to Prometheus' advice he did not father on Thetis a son who would surpass him" (Murgatroyd (2009) 60).

45 On this ecphrasis, see Heerink (2014) 74–81.

46 On Argo's voyage within Jupiter's political agenda, see Stover (2012) 27–150.

been shown to use image-complexes drawn from these celestial wars to probe the issues—both political and poetical—that faced the Roman state in the 70s.[47] Valerius' depiction of the critical role played by *clementia* in the post-civil war inauguration of the new Jovian regime prompts us to consider the allegorical potential in the episode. For Vespasian—even more than for Nero, to whom Seneca addressed his *De Clementia* at the start of his reign—difficult choices had to be made, distinctions had to be drawn concerning who could be pardoned and who could not, and thought had to be given to how and by whose urging and for what reasons these decisions were to be made. As for Jupiter and his sons, so too for Vespasian and his sons, there are tough choices to be made, choices that will not only have an impact on other families, but that will also reflect the character of the new ruling family itself. For Seneca, the princeps who rules based on *clementia* is characterized by a remarkable degree of *humanitas* (*Cl.* 2.5.2–3).[48] The king's decision to liberate Prometheus, humanity's greatest champion, is thus a fascinating context in which to probe the inner workings of the new world order, the *lex Iouis*.[49] Luckily for Rome, if Suetonius is to be believed, Vespasian was a kind and clement ruler (*Vesp.* 12): *statim ab initio principatus usque ad exitum ciuilis et clemens* ("right from the very beginning of his reign all the way to his death he was kind and merciful").[50] Given the supra-legal, arbitrary, and nepotistic nature of the *lex Iouis* that is depicted in Valerius' *Argonautica*, for those who were only metaphorically sons of the *pater patriae* the emperor's character will have made all the difference in the world.[51]

Neptune and Amycus

However one interprets Apollo's appeal to his father and Jupiter's decision to release Prometheus, one thing is clear: the juxtaposition of this narrative sequence with the subsequent one, i.e. the boxing match between Amycus and

47 For a reading of Valerius' *Argonautica* as a product of Vespasianic Rome that makes great use of gigantomachic imagery, see Stover (2012). See now also Fucecchi (2013) 107–122.

48 See Braund (2009) 67–68.

49 It is also worth noting that according to Seneca the proper exercise of *clementia* can make the ruler Jovian (*Cl.* 1.19.9). The allegorical potential of the episode is great indeed. For Valerius' depiction of a Jovian Vespasian elsewhere, see Stover (2012) 27–77.

50 On Vespasian's "readiness to forgive human frailties", which offset his *seueritas*, see Morgan (2006) 73.

51 On the diminution of the individual *paterfamilias* triggered by the emperor being considered Rome's 'national father', see Bernstein (2008) 17–18.

Pollux, creates a remarkable contrast. The *clementia* exhibited by Jupiter is far removed from the *crudelitas* of Amycus, son of Neptune.[52] In fact, in Senecan terms Valerius here enacts a movement from the virtue of *clementia* to the vice that is its exact opposite, *crudelitas* (*Cl.* 2.4.1): *quid ergo opponitur clementiae? crudelitas, quae nihil aliud est quam atrocitas animi in exigendis poenis* ("what therefore is the opposite of mercy? It is cruelty, which is nothing other than savagery of mind when it comes to exacting punishments"). The exercise of *clementia* is the mark of a good ruler, while *crudelitas* is the mark of tyrants like Busiris and Procrustes (*Cl.* 2.4.1), mythical kings whose cruelty to travelers passing through their territory bears striking similarities to Valerius' Amycus.[53] Indeed, Amycus not only embodies a contrast with Jupiter, the Bebrycian son of Neptune has explicitly rejected the *lex Iouis* (*aliis rex Iuppiter oris*, "Jupiter is king on other shores", 4.219) and has replaced it with another *lex*, the law of violence (209–210): *Neptuni domus atque egomet Neptunia proles. / hic mihi lex caestus aduersaque tollere contra / bracchia* ("this is Neptune's house and I am Neptune's offspring. Here my law is to lift boxing gloves and to raise my arms in combat against another").[54] And although this anti-Jovian villain will not be confronted by Jupiter himself, the *lex Iouis* will be imposed on Bebrycia nonetheless, as Jupiter's son Pollux takes center stage to defeat this tyrannical son of Neptune.[55]

One of the distinguishing features of Valerius' version of events in Bebrycia is his highlighting of the familial connections of both Amycus and Pollux.[56] We are constantly reminded that Pollux is Jupiter's son (4.256, 311–314, 327–328, and 341–343) and that Amycus is Neptune's son (4.109, 114–130, 150, 186, 213, 256, and 319), an emphasis that far exceeds anything we find in Apollonius' version.[57] As a result, the boxing match takes on the feel of a conflict by proxy between Jupiter and Neptune.[58] The outcome of the fight thus has broader significance within the thematic economy of the narrative. Pollux' victory is cast not only as a glorious personal achievement, but rather as a victory for his

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52 "[T]he placement of this action [sc. Apollo's appeal and Jupiter's decision] immediately before the events at Bebrycia (Apollo's plea could just as easily have occurred before the actual release of Prometheus in Book 5, for instance) contrasts neatly the civilized mercy of Jove with the barbaric slaughter of Neptune's son Amycus" (Otte (1992) 83).

53 On Seneca's citation of Busiris and Procrustes as exemplary tyrants, see Braund (2009) 397.

54 See Shelton (1984) 21, who notes that Amycus' law is the "law of violence".

55 On the un-Apollonian anti-Jovian nature of Valerius' Amycus, see Stover (2012) 82–83.

56 On the episode's obsession with lineage and identity, see Shelton (1984).

57 See Ripoll (1998) 74.

58 See Shelton (1984) 21 and Otte (1992) 83–84.

father Jupiter (*uictori ... parenti*, 4.343). And whereas Jupiter's status is further augmented by his son's victory, Amycus' loss reflects poorly on Neptune's place in the political pecking order.[59] These issues are foregrounded well before the fight by none other than Neptune himself. As he sees the Argo approaching Bebrycia, knowing full well that his son will not survive the Argonauts' brief stay, he laments:

> infelix, imas quondam mihi rapta sub undas
> nec potius magno, Melie, tum mixta Tonanti!
> usque adeone meam quacumque ab origine prolem
> tristia fata manent? ...
> nec tibi nunc uirtus aut det fiducia nostri,
> nate, animos opibusque ultra ne crede paternis.
> iam iam aliae uires maioraque sanguine nostro
> uincunt fata Iouis, potior cui cura suorum est.
>
> V. Fl. 4.118–121, 124–127

> Unlucky Melie, you who were once snatched by me beneath the waves and did not instead mingle with the great Thunderer! Do such sad fates always await my offspring no matter their origin? ... Son, do not let your manliness or confidence in me give you courage and do not any longer put trust in your father's power. Already now the strength of others and Jupiter's decrees, which are greater than my blood, win the day. Jupiter's concern for his own is too potent.

Neptune frames the impending boxing match as an event illustrative of the new world order ushered in by the Jovian regime. In this new world, according to Neptune, Jupiter's power is absolute (*uincunt fata Iouis*, 127); hence there is nothing he can do to oppose its spread. Once upon a time Neptune may have been prominent enough to aid his son, but the political climate now has changed, such that Jupiter and his favorites rule the day (*potior cui cura suorum est*, 127). Neptune clearly does not believe that the *fata Iouis* are unfolding impartially, as Jupiter had claimed in response to Sol's s implication that nepotism was a feature of the Jovian regime (1.533–535).[60] At any rate, Valerius' Amycus episode depicts how victory for the one father/son pair involves, indeed necessitates, loss for the other father and son. In fact, Neptune's words here

59 See Ripoll (1998) 74 and Bernstein (2008) 11.

60 See Korn (1989) 103 and Otte (1992) 84.

allusively link his son to Vergil's Dido and Turnus, the two most famous characters on the wrong side of history in all of Latin epic.[61] Unlike them, however, the Valerian Amycus is a wholly despicable character. As many have noted, Valerius radically increases the villainous qualities of Apollonius' Amycus to create a savage monster of titanic—and Titanic—proportions, a creature on par with the Giants, anti-Jovian agents of chaos par excellence.[62] It is therefore difficult to sympathize with Neptune as he laments the impending death of his son (on which more below).[63]

The depiction of the boxing match between Pollux and Amycus as a terrestrial Gigantomachy justifies Neptune's reference to the death of his son as part of the larger implementation of the *fata Iouis*. Jupiter himself prominently highlights his victory over the Giants as a seminal moment in his rise to cosmic supremacy, using this victory as an example for his sons to follow so that they may achieve greatness and, ultimately, immortality (1.563–566). Hence this episode not only depicts Pollux following in his father's footsteps by becoming a 'Giant-slayer', the boxing match is also a microcosm of the epic's overarching theme of the inauguration of the Jovian regime.[64] Furthermore, the gigantomachic dimensions of the fight invite us to read this narrative sequence as symbolic of civil war, the specter of which is already raised by the fact that the match is something of an *acies fraterna* by proxy.[65] This is so because in Valerius' *Argonautica* the Gigantomachy is used as a model for civil war and, as I have argued elsewhere, specifically for the civil war that paved the way

61 See Murgatroyd (2009) 90. See also Korn (1989) 103.

62 See Schönberger (1965) 130, Shelton (1984), Hardie (1993) 84, Hershkowitz (1998) 78–91, Ripoll (1998) 76, Zissos (2002) 89–92, Bettenworth (2003), Murgatroyd (2008), Leigh (2010) 139–143, and Cowan (2014) 234–236, 241–244. On Apollonius' Amycus, see Hunter (1993) 28–29 and Mori (2008) 184–185.

63 See Cowan (2014) 242–244, who notes that the intense partisanship of the father's perspective is foreground by having Neptune 'vouch' for a son who turns out to be a wholly inhumane monster.

64 See Hardie (1993) 84–85, Zissos (2003) 667, and Bernstein (2008) 32. On the inaugural dimensions of Valerius' epic, see Stover (2012) 27–77. In a related vein, Shelton (1984) sees Bebrycia as a microcosm of the sea and thus suggests that Pollux' triumph over Amycus is symbolic of the conquest of Ocean.

65 In this regard it is worth noting that at *Theb.* 11.126 Statius echoes Valerius' *abstulit … oculos* ("he looked away," 4.131), which is used of Neptune turning away from the boxing match. In Statius, Jupiter orders the gods not to watch the climactic duel between Eteocles and Polynices with the phrase *auferte oculos* ("look away!"). Thus it appears that for Statius the Valerian boxing match was indeed evocative of *fraternas acies*. The echo is noted by Venini (1970) 41.

for the inauguration of the Flavian dynasty.[66] Consequently whereas Statius, by recourse to the Gigantomachy, mythologizes the fighting on the Capitoline between the Vitellian and Flavian forces (*Silu.* 5.3.195–197)—a battle in which the victor's son, Domitian, played a prominent role—we are invited to historicize the gigantomachic battle between Pollux/Jupiter and Amycus/Neptune.[67] If we accept this invitation, some interesting possibilities emerge for understanding how Valerius' *Argonautica* not only engages with its historical context, but also how it offers auto-referential commentary on the mechanisms of this very engagement.[68]

In addition to emphasizing that Pollux and Amycus are cousins and casting the boxing match between them as a terrestrial Gigantomachy, there are several other ways in which Valerius prompts us to read this sequence as symbolic of civil war. For instance, at one point during the fight the combatants take a moment to catch their breath before reentering the fray. This momentary pause is likened to masses of men being refreshed by Mars while taking a brief break from war:

> … respirant ambo paulumque reponunt
> bracchia, ceu Lapithas aut Paeonas aequore in ipso
> cum refouet fixaque silet Gradiuus in hasta.
>
> V. Fl. 4.279–281

> For a moment they both catch their breath and relax their arms, just as when on the battlefield itself Mars refreshes the Lapiths or Paeonians as he silently leans on his spear which is fixed in the ground.

This simile is remarkable, and not inspired by Apollonius.[69] Although Valerius' Hellenistic predecessor mentions the two boxers resting for a moment during the fight (2.86–87) he does not mark this pause with a simile.[70] By evoking the image of whole armies on the battlefield (*aequore in ipso*, 4.280) Valerius depicts the event as warfare.[71] But it is a specific kind of warfare indeed, namely

66 See Stover (2012) 79–150.

67 For a historicizing reading of this episode with a different focus, see Zissos (2003), who sees the boxing match as reflective of the "incompatibility between Roman aristocratic ambition … and the new realities of the political configurations of the principate" (670).

68 See Lovatt (2005) 109, who notes that "Gigantomachy is inevitably political."

69 In fact, Gärtner (1994) 328 does not list any models for the simile.

70 See Murgatroyd (2009) 154.

71 See Lovatt (2005) 151 n. 19. On the arena as a substitute for war, see Man. 4.225–226, with

civil war: the usage of *aut* (280) indicates that the Lapiths and Paeonians are not imagined as fighting each other. Rather the implication is that they are fighting amongst themselves in separate episodes of civil discord.[72] And the specter of civil war only increases when we realize that the Valerian simile compares both Pollux and Amycus to the same individual, namely Mars.[73] The troubling sameness of the combatants is evocative of *bellum ciuile*, a kind of warfare in which distinctions between the two sides are liable to collapse.[74] In this regard, it is worth noting that on two separate occasions Amycus "thunders in his wrath" (*protonat ira*, 205; *detonet ira*, 294). These verbs, together with Dymas' earlier reference to Amycus' "lightning quick right hand" (*fulminea ... dextra*, 167), render the Bebrycian king disconcertingly Jovian as he squares off against the Jovian hero Pollux. In fact, Murgatroyd has made the intriguing suggestion that these passages, along with Amycus' claim that Jupiter has no authority in Bebrycia (219), converge to depict Amycus as a "fake Jupiter"—a pretender to the throne, as it were—who is taken down by the "son of the real one".[75] Finally, it has been shown that Valerius' deployment of imagery associated with the amphitheater connects the Amycus episode to the civil war in Colchis narrated in Book 6.[76] Thus, although Valerius is at pains to distinguish Pollux from Amycus by emphasizing the differences in character they have inherited from their fathers,[77] he nevertheless frames their combat as civil war, allowing us to see that in some ways the two men are not so different after all. All of this suggests an intense engagement throughout this episode with the recent history of the Roman state.

The use of the Gigantomachy as a model for civil war achieves several things; chief among them is that it casts one side as a barbaric and criminal 'other' whose impious ways make them fit for elimination and/or imprisonment.

Zissos (2003) 680 n. 76, who cites its relevance for the boxing match, albeit with a different focus from mine.

72 See Spaltenstein (2004) 275. See also Murgatroyd (2009) 154, who allows for the possibility that civil war is in play here before opting to regard the Lapiths and Paeonians as engaged in wars against unnamed foreign enemies. On the Lapiths and Paeonians, see Korn (1989) 186.

73 See Murgatroyd (2009) 155.

74 See Quint (1989) 3. On this theme and its elaboration in Valerius' narrative, see Stover (2012) 113–150.

75 See Murgatroyd (2009) 121–122. Amycus can thus be considered a kind of latter-day Salmoneus, whose impious attempt to usurp Jupiter's prerogatives is referred to at 1.659–665, on which see Stover (2012) 106–110.

76 See Zissos (2003) 668.

77 See Leigh (2010) 139–143.

It thus works to disambiguate combatants who are disconcertingly similar, thereby "masking the self-destructive element [of civil war] behind a palatable façade".[78] To revert once more to Statius' formulation at *Silu.* 5.3.195–197, by likening the self-destructive fighting on the Capitoline in AD 69 to the Gigantomachy Statius casts the Flavians as the pious defenders of Jupiter's home on earth—a kind of terrestrial Olympus—against the impious, villainous, and monstrous Vitellians who are bent on overturning the 'Jovian' order.[79] It is a model that clearly valorizes and lauds the victors while castigating and vilifying the losers. Indeed, there will have been great pressure on writers to portray the war's winners favorably while denigrating the losers, especially if they were still in power at the time of writing, as was the case for Valerius.[80] And during the 70s denigration of Vespasian's predecessors—the Vitellians mainly, but also Nero—was in the air.[81] Alongside it was a pro-Flavian bias triggered by virtue of Vespasian's victory that would have made it all too easy for authors to exploit a "contrast between evil Vitellians and virtuous Flavians".[82] Such a contrast is precisely what Valerius' deployment of gigantomachic imagery aims for. With these points in mind, let us return to the boxing match between Pollux and Amycus.

For starters, it is clear that Valerius has vilified Amycus by casting him as a Giant. But he has done so by foregrounding the political dimensions of Amycus' Giant-like character: not only does Amycus oppose the *lex Iouis*, but he opposes the very centerpiece of Jupiter's political agenda, the voyage of Argo, which is designed to open up the world and thus usher in a new age (4.219–221): *aliis rex Iuppiter oris. / faxo Bebrycium nequeat transcendere puppis / ulla fretum et ponto uolitet Symplegas inani* ("Jupiter is king on other shores. I shall make it that not a single ship traverses Bebrycian waters and that the Symplegades move swiftly on an empty sea").[83] Apollonius' Amycus, despite being a Giant-like character (2.1–4, 38–40) does not express any politicized anti-Jovian or anti-Argonautic

78 The quotation comes from Ash (1999) 10, in a discussion of Caesar's narrative technique in the *De Bello Ciuili*. On Valerius' use of gigantomachic image-complexes to disambiguate the two sides in the 'civil war' at Cyzicus, see Stover (2012) 113–148.

79 See Gibson (2006) 343.

80 This point is foregrounded by Tacitus at the outset of his account of the civil war (*Hist.* 1.1). See also Ash (1999) 2.

81 See Ferrill (1964–1965) and Ramage (1983).

82 See Ash (1999) 71–73, 95 (the quotation comes from p. 71).

83 See Stover (2012) 82–83 for a discussion of how this stance aligns Amycus with subversive enemies of the Jovian regime such as Boreas and Aeolus.

sentiments.[84] This opposition to the valorized and privileged Jovian agenda, coupled with Valerius' depiction of him as *crudelitas* incarnate, function to locate Amycus outside the confines of the orderly, rational, and 'Olympian' universe; that is, Amycus is wholly 'other'.[85] He is thus easy to hate. In war—and in civil war particularly—conceiving of the enemy as a savage monster whose existence threatens the 'right' way of life and who must therefore be destroyed is a well attested phenomenon.[86]

Another way in which Valerius paints Amycus as the barbaric 'other' is his exceedingly vivid account of the boxing match itself, and especially the divergent fighting styles of the two combatants.[87] Whereas Pollux, Jupiter's son, fights with skill, wisdom, and finesse, Amycus is the very embodiment of heedless and frenzied brute strength. This is perhaps most easily illustrated by the sequence at 4.261–272. There Amycus during his unfocused assault is likened to a "violent hurricane" (*turbo rapax*, 262) that rushes headlong in a huge mass (*inmanis*, 264), while Pollux, who is quick on his feet (267) and thus able to evade the other's 'torrent of punches' is likened to the helmsman of a ship whose skill (*arte*, 272) saves it from the ravages of a storm. On the one hand, the fight thus represents the victory of skill (Pollux) over raw force (Amycus), in keeping with its gigantomachic nature.[88] On the other hand, Valerius' emphasis on the combatants' different fighting styles is paralleled in accounts of civil war. For example, Tacitus depicts the Vitellians as barbaric and 'un-Roman' largely because they fight in a disorderly and reckless manner (*Hist.* 2.14.3): *obtulere se hosti incaute* ("they hurled themselves against the enemy recklessly"). This distinguishes them from the more 'Roman' Othonians who employ organized and skillful tactics to thwart them.[89] The discipline displayed by Pollux in this 'civil war' thus renders him more civilized—i.e. more

84 Valerius has ramped up the anti-Jovian nature of his Amycus largely by recourse to the figure of Homer's (and Vergil's) Polyphemus. See Bettenworth (2003).

85 It is worth noting that according to Suetonius cruelty was one of the hallmarks of Vitellius' character (*Vit.* 13.1): *praecipue luxuriae saeuitiaeque deditus* ("he was especially given over to luxury and cruelty"); (*Vit.* 14.1): *pronus uero ad cuiuscumque et quacumque de causa necem atque supplicium* ("indeed he was disposed to killing and punishing anyone whomsoever for any reason whatsoever"). See Morgan (2006) 148, who discusses Tacitus' emphasis on Vitellius' cruelty in order to depict him as "a quasi-Persian king in Rome".

86 See Ash (1999) 15.

87 See Zissos (2003) 664, who remarks that the boxing match is "one of the most vivid pieces of narration in extant Roman epic".

88 See Gärtner (1994) 243–244 and Zissos (2003) 665.

89 See Ash (1999) 41–42.

Roman—than Amycus, whose heedlessness marks him as distinctly 'other'.[90] Tacitus also uses height to distinguish the 'foreign' Vitellians, who had a sizeable German element in their ranks, from the shorter, more 'Roman' Flavians.[91] Vitellius' own remarkable height would have made the process of denigration easier (Suet. *Vit.* 17.2): *erat enim in eo enormis proceritas* ("in fact he was unusually tall").[92] At any rate, Amycus' towering height (4.149, 202–203) is a damning part of Valerius' portrait of this son of Neptune. Apollonius' Amycus was a treacherous villain; in the Valerian narrative he is completely dehumanized (201–202): *mortalia nusquam / signa manent* ("nowhere do the signs of humanity remain on him"). Instead he becomes a "terrifying monster of enormous size and strength, a creature of rage and savagery".[93] This Neptunian enemy of the Jovian order, this representative of history's losers, has been literally demonized.

But the same process has not been undertaken with respect to Amycus' subjects, who have been rehabilitated in the Valerian narrative. In Apollonius' version of events at Bebrycia, after Amycus is killed by Pollux the Bebrycians, in an attempt to avenge the death of their king, attack the Argonauts (2.98–163). In Valerius, things are vastly different. As soon as Amycus is killed the Bebrycians take to the hills in flight because they possess "no love for their slain king" (4.315–316): *Bebrycas extemplo spargit fuga; nullus adempti / regis amor: montem celeres siluamque capessunt* ("the Bebrycians immediately scatter in flight; they have no love for their slain king: swiftly they make for the hills and woods"). The disunion between Amycus and his subjects is telling.[94] Amycus clearly maintained his power through fear alone and does not inspire acts of selfless devotion in his followers. Pollux may be willing to fight to the death to defeat this enemy of his father's political agenda (4.187–192) but none of the Bebrycians is willing to put his life on the line for Amycus. This suggests that, although they assisted him in his cruel 'sport' (4.107–109), the Bebrycian masses are not themselves wicked, but had rather been held in check by fear of Amycus' ruthlessness (200–201): *quem nec sua turba tuendo / it taciti secura metus* ("not even his own subjects were free of silent fear when they gazed

90 In a passing but suggestive remark Zissos (2003) 667 n. 28 says, "Like a good Roman general, Pollux carefully scrutinizes his wild and unsystematic opponent and gains knowledge of his fighting methods … before engaging him directly".

91 See Ash (1999) 50.

92 See Morgan (2006) 78.

93 Murgatroyd (2009) 76. See also Hershkowitz (1998) 82–87.

94 See Lovatt (2005) 152 n. 20.

at him").[95] They too are victims of Amycus' *crudelitas* who are only 'on the wrong side', as it were, until the death of the tyrant. The implication is that they can be offered *clementia* after the fighting is over and thus be reconciled with the Jovian regime. Indeed, making such distinctions between leaders and led was an important part of the civil war of AD 68–69. For example, after defeating the Vitellian forces on the battlefield the Flavians treated them with kindness and respect (Tac. *Hist.* 3.63.1). Although Vitellius himself and other Vitellian leaders cannot be reconciled with, this strategy vis-à-vis the troops has an important and practical political function, namely to make the ex-Vitellians "more receptive to the new regime."[96] And there is no question but that Vespasian tirelessly promoted the idea that he had taken the field only to liberate Romans from the 'slavery' imposed on them by the 'monster' Vitellius.[97]

Conclusion

So clearly, the winner is able to cast his actions in the best possible light while simultaneously denigrating and vilifying his defeated enemy. But what is remarkable about this Valerian episode is that we are also provided with some sympathy for the fallen Amycus, however overshadowed it is by the demonization process I have been tracing. This sympathy comes from Amycus' father Neptune who, as we have seen, laments his son's demise at the beginning of the episode (4.114–132). On the one hand, Neptune's sympathy for his son demonstrates that, like other fathers such as Sol and Jupiter, he too has a partisan perspective regarding his offspring. To Neptune, Amycus is no monster; rather, he is a beloved son whose death pains his father greatly. On the other hand, Neptune's paternal sympathy for his son introduces an alternative perspective, one that runs counter to the prevailing focalization of the episode whereby Amycus is a hellish demon whose destruction is part of the establishment of the valorized *lex Iouis*.[98] We thus catch a fleeting glimpse of a different view of one of history's losers, one that does not subscribe to the demonization process

95 On the manner in which Valerius isolates Amycus from his subjects, see Zissos (2003) 662 n. 13 and Cowan (2014) 235–236.

96 Ash (1999) 53–54.

97 See Morgan (2006) 170–171. On Vespasian's claim by way of coinage issued in 71 to be the *adsertor libertatis publicae* ("defender of the people's freedom"), see Hammond (1963), Watson (1973), and Baldwin (1975).

98 Here I am indebted to the excellent discussion of Cowan (2014) 242–244.

that informs the narrator's authorial—perhaps even 'official'—perspective on the episode. This prompts us to reflect on the differing fates of the winner—Jupiter's son Pollux—and the loser—Neptune's son Amycus. By losing, Amycus becomes susceptible to vilification by the victor, a process that so dehumanizes him that his destruction becomes a constructive act in the establishment of a 'better' world. His death is therefore mourned only by his father, in a private and pitiful show of grief that highlights his utter powerlessness (4.131–132). By winning, Pollux takes another step on the "pathway to heaven" (*iter … caeli*, 1.565) laid out for him by his father, who partakes of the victory's glory no less than the son. Indeed, the process by which the victorious family is glorified is on full display (4.341–343): *toto mox tempore mensae / laetus ouat nunc laude uirum nunc uatis honoro / carmine, uictori geminans cratera parenti* ("Afterward, during the entire feast Pollux joyfully exults now at the praise of the heroes, now at the poet's honoring song, making two libations to his victorious father"). The winner is not only praised by his comrades (*laude uirum*, 342), but he is also hymned in laudatory song (*uatis honoro / carmine*, 342–343). This formulation recalls the poem's opening, where the *uates* Valerius (1.5) characterizes his narrative as the commemoration of "heroic deeds" (*facta uirum*, 12). The heroes, history's winners, are immortalized in songs that praise their accomplishments. The villains, history's losers, are immortalized too, only they appear as the monstrous 'other' in need of removal by the heroic agents of civilized order.[99] Valerius' *Argonautica* valorizes the implementation of the *lex Iouis*, but it also prompts us to reflect on the mechanisms by which this new world order has come to be valorized. By focusing on fathers and sons on the wrong side of history, we can discern in Valerius' poem a dissonant perspective, one that challenges and problematizes the epic's primary focus on Jovian triumphalism. By keeping history's losers in view, we come to better appreciate the richness, nuance, and socio-political perspicacity with which Valerius' narrative traces the varying fortunes of the "sons of the gods" (*deum … natis*, 1.1).

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99 For a stimulating reading of the strikingly similar issues at play in Silius' depiction of Hannibal as a Salmoneus-like theomach in *Punica* 12, see Chaudhuri (2014) 246–248.

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Daddy's Little Girl? The Father/Daughter Bond in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* and Flavian Rome*

Claire Stocks

Introduction

'Family' mattered in ancient Rome, especially in those elite households where familial bonds faced scrutiny under a political spotlight. When Rome transitioned to a *princeps*-led society this political spot-light became all the more intense, as emperors (from 2 BC onwards) found themselves double-functioning as a father of their household and as a *pater* for Rome. The emperor Augustus found this out to his cost when, in the same year in which he was awarded the title *pater patriae* (2 BC), he was 'forced' to exile his daughter Julia for her indiscretions.[1] So too the emperor Vespasian, if we can believe the later accounts of Suetonius and Tacitus, had to negotiate a difficult path between maintaining a façade of familial harmony,[2] in the face of simmering tension between his two sons Titus and Domitian.[3]

* I would like to thank Lien Foubert and Olivier Hekster for their comments and advice on earlier drafts of this paper.

1 See p. 47 below.

2 Both the literary sources and material culture support the idea that the Flavians wished to maintain a façade of familial harmony. Among the literary sources Tacitus, for example, shows Titus pleading for mercy for Domitian by stressing the importance of 'family' as a support for imperial power: *non classis proinde firma imperii munimenta quam numerum liberorum* (*Hist.* 4.52). It is also clear that the Flavians minted coins which stressed the importance of the family unit and familial ideals (on these coins and others minted during the Flavian period see especially Carradice and Buttrey (2007)). *Fides* and *pietas* featured prominently on this coinage as part of the Flavians' attempt to restore Augustan 'ideals'. See Liebeschuetz (1979) 167–182, Lind (1992) 20–21, and Bernstein (2008) 156.

3 For the most part, Suetonius and Tacitus focus on the resentment (and plots) of Domitian with respect to his elder brother (e.g. Suet. *Tit.* 9.3 and *Dom.* 2.3; Tac. *Hist.* 4.51–52). Whilst these later accounts of the Flavian boys' relationship is not without their problems, most scholars agree that Domitian's attitude towards his brother was one of resentment. Mellor (2003) 83 observes: "though Domitian was far from incompetent, his long wait in the antechamber of power left him bitter". Levick (1999) 188–189 suggests a reason for this bitterness, namely that evidence from the period indicates that Vespasian and Titus did not allow Domitian serious advancement, instead focusing on his position as a possible heir for

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The tension within these imperial families, as well as elite Roman families in general, is one that we see played out in the familial units of epic, where high-ranking families stand united and divided in equal measure. Such tension was a natural by-product of epic, which drew predominantly upon mythological *exempla* for its subject matter including those *exempla* which featured heavily in tragedy, a genre that employed the elite family unit as a means of exploring the friction between the family (*oikos*) and the state (*polis*).[4] And yet Roman epic added something further to the mix, functioning as a genre in which well-known mythological *exempla* (and even 'historical' figures) could serve as a model for elite family relationships, and in which Rome's elite, especially its imperial family, could see reflected an image of itself.[5]

This paper focuses on the reciprocal relationship between epic and elite families in Rome, focusing primarily on Flavian epic and on one relationship in particular—that between fathers and daughters. Much attention has been focused in recent years on familial bonds in Flavian epic,[6] but whilst the dynamic between fathers and their sons has received particular attention, the bond between fathers and daughters has remained relatively unexplored; especially with regard to how such relationships, supposedly based on the Augustan and Flavian ideals of *fides* and *pietas*, should be situated within a literary and political world that placed father/son relationships, including that between Vespasian and his two sons, at its heart.

In this paper, therefore, I explore how Flavian epic, notably Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, responded to the complex nature of father/daughter relationships in Rome. In particular, I focus on one of the most complex father/daughter relationships in epic, namely that of Medea and Aeetes. Here, the dilemma of Valerius' Medea as to whether or not she should help Jason is framed within the expected parameters of whether or not she should show loyalty to her father

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the future. She also observes (pp. 184–185) that Vespasian and Titus shared the title of 'Caesar'. On the reception of Domitian in these literary sources see especially Wilson (2003).

4 Sophocles' *Antigone*, for example, presents (in part) the conflict between Antigone and Kreon as a conflict between *oikos* and *polis*. See Griffith (1999) 48–50.

5 See, for example, the complex relationship between Virgil's Aeneas and Augustus in the *Aeneid* (e.g. Hardie (1986)). In Flavian epic Scipio Africanus in Silius Italicus' *Punica* can be perceived as both being a model for, and modelled on, Domitian (see Marks (2005) 209–288), whilst Statius' Eteocles and Polynices (e.g. Stat. *Theb.* 12.429–446), in addition to offering a clear parallel for Romulus and Remus and the origin of Rome's civil-war tendencies, may also hint at that well-documented fraternal conflict between Domitian and his brother Titus. See especially Coffee (2006) and Bernstein (2008), esp. 64–104.

6 See especially Bernstein (2008).

(*supplex hinc sternitur hospes, / hinc pater*, 7.143–144), yet Valerius' decision to present the choice of this legendary 'barbarian other' in Roman terms—i.e. as a question of *fides* and *pietas*—allows us to read Medea's dilemma as one faced by the elite Roman *filia*, who finds herself caught between the loyalty owed to her father, (prospective) husband, and the State.

Paternity in Flavian Rome and Flavian Epic

Roma may have been depicted as a female goddess in iconography, but it was the male role of *pater*, "father", that was central in Roman society. At both the domestic (e.g. the *paterfamilias*) and political (e.g. *pater patriae*) level, the idea of fatherhood was twinned with the responsibility that one owed to the family and the State, with the importance of the paternal role felt in all areas of society and culture, including literature.[7] Flavian epic was no exception to this rule, and throughout these texts we find multiple examples of father/son, as well as father/daughter relationships that illustrate not just the significance of fatherhood, but also its complexities: e.g. the tension caused by sons who run the risk of usurping their fathers' positions or, worse still, failing to live up to them (e.g. Marcellus and son, Sil. 15.353 ff.), and daughters whose efforts to show loyalty (*fides*) to their fathers bring them into conflict with the state (e.g. Hypsipyle, Stat. *Theb*. 5.239–248).[8]

When it comes to these daughters of epic, their role—together with that of women in general—has often been viewed as a subversive or disruptive element in texts that deal primarily with "the affairs of men", with some women threatening to undermine the hero's martial prowess, or even—in the case of Virgil's Dido—to derail an empire.[9] If a woman was not threatening to destabilise the fabric of epic and its martial (manly) exploits then her place was traditionally in the home; her role that of a dutiful wife (e.g. Penelope), or a dutiful daughter (e.g. Argia).[10]

7 On the role of the 'father' within the imperial household, including numismatic evidence, see for example Hekster (2015) 41–110.

8 On sons who fail to live up to their fathers in Flavian epic, see Stocks (2014) 145. On Hypsipyle, whose actions—whilst praised by the poet—run contrary to those of the other Lemnians, see pp. 50–51 below.

9 On epic as the forum for the "glorious deeds of men" see Hom. *Il*. 9.190, *Od*. 8.73, A.R. 1.1. On women in epic as subversive elements see, for example, Hinds (2000) 227.

10 Penelope was perceived as the epitome of the loyal wife (see Newby (2014) 281), although her portrayal in antiquity appears to have been varied and complex; see Peskowitz (1997)

The split between those women of epic who adhere to a traditional domestic role versus those who are considered 'disruptive' as a result of their unconventional actions, is something that we see mirrored in Roman society as depicted through its literary sources. The relationship of fathers and daughters in ancient Rome is something that has attracted only a moderate amount of attention from scholars with the notable exception of Hallett's detailed 1984 study, *Fathers and Daughters in Roman Society*. A key facet of Hallett's argument is her discussion of the so-called 'paradox' of the elite Roman female within a patriarchal society:

> Merely a superficial inquiry into the position of women among the Roman upper classes reveals what scholars appear to regard as a paradoxical fact: that many well-born women are remembered as possessing forceful personalities and exerting a substantial impact on men's public affairs, despite their society's extolling of domesticity as women's only proper concern, and despite their own legal disabilities and formal exclusion from political participation.[11]

That a woman's place *ought* to be in the home appears clear from the evidence that we have of Roman women's life and education. Whilst opinions vary on the level of education available to elite Roman women, what education there was is likely to have taken place at home.[12] This was in contrast to male offspring, for whom education *outside* the home offered them, among other things, the opportunity to form social bonds thus preparing them for a life in politics and society at large. As Quintilian (1.8.2) observes, public speaking was the forum of the male pupil who was, "above all", supposed to read in a manly fashion (*sit autem in primis lectio uirilis et cum sanctitate quadam grauis*) and to avoid an "effeminate" (*effeminata*) tone, and he was to "lift-up his mind"

1–10 and Lindheim (2003) 37–50 (esp. the Ovidian Penelope). In Statius' *Thebaid*, Argia departs from her role of 'dutiful daughter' once her husband Polynices has been killed (see Bernstein (2008) 97). On wives and husbands in Flavian epic see Newlands in this volume.

11 Hallett (1984) 6.

12 Keith (2000) 12, for example, observes that "evidence for the education of upper-class Roman women is ample", whereas Hemelrijk (1999) 18 writes that "The scanty evidence for female education has given rise to widely different opinions ranging from a somewhat naive belief in equal opportunities for Roman boys and girls (at least at the elementary level), to the assumption that only a very small proportion of girls received any education at all." On Achilles' re-education as a daughter on Scyros see Bessone in this volume.

with the sublimity of heroic verse (*sublimitate heroi carminis animus adsurgat*). The education of the elite therefore reinforced the notion of male activeness at the expense of the female voice. And yet what may be viewed as female vocal suppression did not result in a lack of influence on the part of some elite Roman women, who—despite lacking any official role within Rome's political system—exerted a considerable amount of authority.[13] Moreover it is not something to which Rome's authors adhered: all too frequently we find texts which play with the notion of gender and how it can disrupt genre, with women challenging not just the position of men but often the very nature of the text itself.[14]

Whilst the position of women, and especially daughters, within Roman society may be portrayed as complex, there is one family role that appears to have been sacrosanct: that of the father. Hallett writes that "one can have little doubt that *patres*, fathers, and hence older males generally functioned as figures of supreme authority from the first moments of Rome's existence".[15] The word 'father' was literally written into Rome's society: Rome's senators were also known as *patres* and Rome's central male deities were often addressed by the title *pater*, in contrast to the extremely limited use of *mater* for female deities.[16]

If the father was at the centre of Roman society, than the daughter's role was to stand dutifully in the background, offering *fides* and support. Yet Rome's literary sources present the father/daughter relationship as one of mutual love and respect, and there are frequent references to the emotional importance of a daughter to her father.[17] A daughter's loyalty was also considered to be life-long

13 Such authority on the part of women was almost invariably dependent upon the position of their male relations (see, for example, D'Ambra (2007) 142), and yet the literary sources record some women whose influence appears to have been openly acknowledged and recognised. Notable among these is Augustus' wife Livia. Cassius Dio (58.2.3) tells us that the Senate voted to set up an arch to Livia upon her death (in 29 AD) because she had "saved the lives of many of them" (ὅτι τε οὐκ ὀλίγους σφῶν ἐσεσώκει). Dio also notes that some had referred to her as 'mother' of the country (μητέρα αὐτὴν τῆς πατρίδος τινὲς ἐπωνόμαζον). See Kleiner (1990) and Flory (1996) 300.

14 On the role of women in epic, including their ability to cross gender roles by (for example) entering the male arena of battle see especially Keith (2000), esp. 26–27, 31.

15 Hallett (1984) 21.

16 On *pater* as an epithet of Rome's major male gods see Holland (1961) 109. On the limited use of *mater*, which suggested that "the idea of fatherhood was invested with more religious awe by the early Romans than was motherhood", see Hallett (1984) 26.

17 The accounts testifying to the strength of this bond are numerous. See Cic. *Att.* 5.19.2 (*filiolam tuam tibi iam Romae iucundam esse gaudeo*), Ov. *Fast.* 6.219–220 (*est mihi, sitque, precor, nostris diuturnior annis, / filia, qua felix sospite semper ero*), and Tac. *Ann.* 16.10–

and was often presented as surpassing loyalty to one's husband.[18] This is in spite of the fact that the relationship between a father and his son-in-law in Rome was an extremely important one, both politically and emotionally.[19] Augustus made all of his chosen successors (Marcellus, Agrippa, and Tiberius) his daughter's husbands and iconography from this period testifies to the importance of family when it came to promoting the imperial image.[20] The importance of the father's role in choosing his daughter's spouse is also something that we see paralleled in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* where Aeetes has taken steps to arrange Medea's betrothal to a youth of his choice (*plena necdum Medea iuuenta / adnuitur thalamis Albani uirgo tyranni*, 5.257–258),[21] and where Medea's mother, as

11, who describes Lucius Vetus' daughter, Pollutia (already in mourning for her murdered husband), dying in a suicide pact with her father and grandmother during Nero's reign of terror. Grief of a father for his dead daughter is also something strongly attested. In the *Epistles* 5.16, Pliny writes to Marcellinus about the death of their friend Fundanus' daughter, noting that Fundanus is consumed with grief for a daughter who was like him in every respect: *amisit enim filiam, quae non minus mores eius quam os uultumque referebat, totumque patrem mira similitudine exscripserat* (5.16.9). The importance of the son looking like the father is well-documented (see Stocks (2014) 98, 98 n. 56); here the stress upon the daughter resembling her father surely confirms that the ideal father/daughter relationship was a harmony of spirit and mind, in additional to a physical resemblance. On Rome's father/daughter bond in its literary sources see especially Hallett (1984) 62–149.

18 Fantham (2006) 3 notes, however, that "the original pattern of marriage gave the bride into her husband's control or *manus*, so that she owed him the obedience of a daughter to her father". The distinction appears to have come down to whether a daughter married into her husband's family *cum manu* or *sine manu*—in the latter case she would remain part of her father's household; see Staples (1998) 75–76. Literary sources attesting to the continued strength of the paternal bond after marriage include Liv. 1.58–60 (rape of Lucretia). Here, stress is placed upon the father and husband who simultaneously cry aloud at Lucretia's suicide (*conclamat uir paterque*, 1.58.12) and Brutus in his speech denouncing the monarchy focuses on the grief of Lucretia's father, rather than that of her husband (1.59.8).

19 Fantham (2006) 4 notes the importance of daughters when it came to making political alliances.

20 The importance of the imperial household and its representation—including that of its female members—became increasingly overt from Tiberius onwards. Flory (1996) 287, with particular focus on the representation of the *domus augusta*, writes: "Imperial dynastic policy gradually admitted women to the prestige of public representation in the most frequented and politically symbolic areas of Rome."

21 Bernstein (2008) 26 writes: "though a traditional component of the Argonautic myth, the epic's narrative of the betrayal of Aeetes also gains further point in a Roman cultural

Medea is departing from the shores of Colchis with *her* chosen fiancé, reminds us from the shore-line of the procedure that ought to have taken place when it came to securing a husband for her daughter (8.153–167).

In fact the only females within Roman society who appear to have been exempt from some notion of fatherly control were the Vestal virgins, whose responsibility it was to guard the hearth of Rome.[22] Yet even their relationship with the *pontifex maximus* was described in paternal terms and Hallett refers to them as "archetypal *filiae*, daughter-figures for the entire Roman community".[23]

If we are to find evidence of the 'disruptive' daughter within Roman society, therefore, we must look at those literary sources which deal not just with elite women, but with those connected to the most politically influential families, especially the imperial household. Women who willingly (or unwillingly) acquired a public role by virtue of living their lives under a political spotlight. These 'problem daughters' are a feature both of Rome's legendary past (e.g. Tullia, Liv. 1.48.7)[24] and the early principate (e.g. Julia Maior, Julia Minor, Agrippina Minor, and even—so some sources would have us believe—Julia Titi).[25] Notable among them is Augustus' daughter Julia Maior, who in 2 BC—not long after Augustus received the title *pater patriae*—caused a scandal, and was exiled to the island of Pandateria (now Ventotene) as a result: a very public punishment for a 'domestic' offence.[26]

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context, in which he would expect as *paterfamilias* to determine the inheritance of his property and to take a primary role in brokering his daughter's marriage."

22 On the initiation ritual of *captio* which removed the potential Vestal Virgin from her father's *potestas* see especially Wildfang (2006) 37–50.

23 Hallett (1984) 84. On Vestal virgins see especially Beard (1980) and Wildfang (2006). Beard (1980) 13 notes that the Vestals also paralleled attributes assigned to Roman wives.

24 Tullia, daughter of King Servius Tullius, drove over her father's corpse (1.48.7). Livy gives several other examples of 'problem' daughters from Rome's legendary past. These include Tarpeia, daughter of the Roman commander Tarpeius, who betrayed Rome's citadel to the Sabines (1.11.6–7) and the unnamed sister of the Horatii brothers, who was killed by her brother—with the approval of her father (1.26.9)—after mourning publicly for her dead fiancé when she saw her brother Horatius returning with his spoils (1.26.1–14).

25 On these imperial women and their portrayal as women of influence, as well as political scapegoats, see especially D'Ambra (2007) 148–164.

26 On Julia's exile, see Suet. *Aug.* 65, Vell. 2.100.2–5, D.C. 55.10.12–16, Sen. *Ben.* 6.32.1–2. Julia's punishment—allegedly for adultery—can be taken as confirmation of "the ideological interweaving of Augustus' family with the state" (Severy (2003) 181). Tacitus (*Ann.* 3.24) implies that in treating Julia's adultery as an act of treason Augustus exceeded the *clementia* of the ancestors (*maiores*) and his "own laws" (*suae leges*). In this sense, then, he abused

It is, then, I argue, this 'paradoxical' father/daughter bond between the elite—and especially imperial—*pater* and his *filia* that serves as a backdrop to the relationship between Valerius' Medea and Aeetes, with Medea offering a reflection of the inherent tension between the image of the dutiful, stay-at-home, daughter and the elite—'disruptive'—Roman female with political influence.[27] In this way Valerius' focus on Medea's struggle to decide between her father and Jason is on one level a commentary upon the Roman elite family and the struggle of the *pater* to maintain influence over his (female) progeny.

Family and the *Argonautica*: Valerius' Portrayal of the Father/Daughter Dynamic

The trend in Roman epic to take a well-known mythological or historical theme and to insert contemporary allusions or references is well-documented.[28] Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* is no exception. References to the Flavians are evident at the outset and Tim Stover has argued that the ties to the Flavians extend far deeper, with "Valerius' *Argonautica* reflect[ing] the inaugural and recuperative dimensions of Vespasian's regime",[29] although this image of renewal is offset by the epic's 'darker' elements, such as the civil conflict of Book 6.[30]

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his own notions of *Romanitas*—by which I mean his views on *clementia* as stated in the *Res Gestae*—as well as blurring the boundary between issues of family and issues of state. Cohen (2008) 206 has argued that Julia's exile constituted a new type of punishment in Rome: exile with a specific destination resulting in "islands [becoming] fixed as the standard places of exile in the Principate". Pandateria (now Ventotene), the island to which Julia was exiled, situated as it is off the Italian coast ensured that Julia still remained conveniently placed to Rome (see Bingham (2003) 383 n. 2). Yet her exile, and specifically exile to an island, which stressed her confinement in physical terms, also bore a hint of the fate of literary females who had 'betrayed' their fathers and suffered (self-imposed) exile as a result: notably Ariadne, who in helping Theseus found herself exiled from her father (and fatherland) and trapped on an island.

27 Medea is depicted as an important figure within her community and it is clear that Aeetes relies (wrongly in this case) on his daughter's spells to aid him (7.550).

28 See, for example, Verg. *A*. 6.791–800 (Augustus) and Luc. 1.33–66 (Nero). Bernstein (2008) 26 notes that Valerius' *Argonautica* imposes Roman ideas of the family upon well-established mythological models.

29 Stover (2012) 2.

30 Despite Jason's claims to Aeetes that he is a peace-loving visitor, he is still spoiling for a fight, in contrast to Apollonius' Jason (see Hershkowitz (1998) 121–122). Valerius' inclusion of the civil-war conflict in Book 6 of his epic offers a forum in which Jason can prove his

The importance of family (especially the role of *pater*) and its relationship to the state is evident from the outset of the *Argonautica*, where Vespasian is referred to as *sancte pater* (1.13).[31] This is reinforced in the surrounding lines by the references to Titus and Domitian, named as the son, *proles* (1.12), and his brother, *frater* (1.13), respectively. These opening lines have naturally attracted much attention from scholars, who for the most part have been concerned with their chronological implications.[32] But aside from the issues of composition that they raise, these lines illustrate a desire to promote an image of familial harmony,[33] with Vespasian as the *genitor* (1.16), who, now deified, emerges as a pseudo Jupiter figure, so implying his paternal protection not only for his immediate family, but also for Rome, as well as evoking memories of his model Augustus (*sancte pater patriae*, Ov. *Fast.* 2.127).[34] Offset against this image of idealised family relations, however, is an image of familial disharmony: that of Pelias who has betrayed his own half-brother, Aeson, and his nephew, Jason. Within the opening lines of his epic, therefore, Valerius signals his intent to reveal both the best—and worst—that elite families have to offer.[35]

When it comes to the 'worst', the most troubling depiction of the family unity in the *Argonautica* is arguably that of the Lemnian women and their menfolk. This episode is not an invention by Valerius, but it has been substantially reconceived so as to frame itself within a Roman imperial context. For amid

martial prowess, but it is also suggestive of the 'darker' elements at work in this epic, as well as a reminder of Rome's civil-war tendencies: the type of warfare that brought the Flavians to power. On Valerius' portrayal of civil war, see especially McGuire (1997) 103–113 and Stover (2012) 113–125.

31 Zissos (2008) 88–89 writes that (88) "*Sancte pater* is a stock imperial address". See too Ov. *Fast.* 2.127, *sancte pater patriae* (Augustus). Bernstein (2008) 17 notes that Augustus' assumption of the title *pater patriae* in 2 BC summarized the nature of the relationship between the emperor and the society under his control; from Augustus onwards the emperor's function as the 'father' of both the state and his own imperial household "resulted in a notional loss of authority for the individual *paterfamilias*".

32 See especially Kleywegt (2005) 19 and Zissos (2008) xv–xvii (who observes that the dating depends upon whether or not the address to Vespasian is made to a living or dead emperor).

33 Feeney (1991) 335 observes that the image of familial harmony in this scene appears "to be celebrating right family relations after the chaos of Nero".

34 On Augustus as a model for Vespasian see especially Boyle (2003) 5–6. On Vespasian as a Jupiter figure see especially Stover (2012) 73–77. In the *Fasti* (2.127–132) Ovid equates Augustus with Jupiter. See n. 31 above.

35 Bernstein (2008) 37: "The tyrants provide a negative model against which the 'good' emperors celebrated in the proem are implicitly invited to compare themselves."

the images of mothers and daughters killing husbands, fathers, and sons is a model of father/daughter behaviour, of *pietas*, that sets a precedent for how we should interpret the relationship of Aeetes and Medea thereafter: that of Hypsipyle and her father Thoas.

The episode begins with an intervention by the poet who refers to Hypsipyle's act of saving her father as a glory, *decus* (2.243), and the single act of praise for her falling country: *decus et patriae laus una ruentis* (2.243). Moreover, Valerius frames his claim that no age will forget her tale, with a reference to the longevity of Rome's Latin records and its imperial household (*palatia regni*, 246),[36] so casting this well-known Lemnian act of filial piety in distinctly Roman terms: *non ulla meo te carmine dictam / abstulerint, durent Latiis modo saecula fastis / Iliacique lares tantique palatia regni* (2.244–246).[37] Her act of *pietas* even bears a hint of Aeneas' escape from Troy as Hypsipyle escapes the burning city with her father: her hands described as "pious" (*pias manus*, 249), whilst she herself is also armed, *armata* (2.249).[38]

Hypsipyle's act, then, stands-out as a beacon of filial piety in the face of its abuse by all those around her. And yet the context for that act, as well as it literary precedent, suggests the heights from which exemplary *pietas* has fallen. For in reading a hint of Aeneas' escape from Troy in this scene, we can see a troubling development in the imitation of an act so often alluded to as the ultimate *exemplum* of Augustan *pietas*.[39] The image of Aeneas escaping with Anchises on his back, leaving behind a city sacked by the Greeks to found the future Rome, has changed into an image of a daughter escaping

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36 Poortvliet (1991) *ad palatia*: "the *Palatium*, Palatine Hill, was the site of the house of Augustus … and of those of later emperors, and so the word came to mean 'imperial residence, palace', first, it would seem in our passage". Augustus made part of his Palatine house public when he became *pontifex maximus* in 12 BC, thus allowing him to adhere to the rule that the *PM* must dwell in a house owned by the State. A further example, therefore, of the public and private worlds of the emperor colliding (see, for example, Wilkinson (2012) 159).

37 Hershkowitz (1998) 136: "Hypsipyle is set up in this introduction as an *exemplum* of heroic female behaviour, and one with a strong Roman dimension". See also Vessey (1985) 335 n. 34: "Hypsipyle, unmarried, is an *exemplum pietatis* in respect to Thoas as *paterfamilias*." On Hypsipyle's narrative of the Lemnian episode see also Heslin in this volume.

38 There are strong parallels between this episode and the *Aeneid*. The narratorial apostrophe at 2.242–246 resembles that of Virgil for Nisus and Euryalus at *A*. 9.446–449, with the success of Hypsipyle's actions juxtaposed with the "foolhardy and fatal" exploits of the Virgilian pair (Bernstein (2008) 51). Poortvliet (1991) *ad pias armata manus*: "Valerius must be hinting at *pius Aeneas*". Also Hershkowitz (1998) 136–138.

39 See, for example, DeRose Evans (1992) 42–54.

with her father (and supporting his limbs, 2.253–254) as a result of a civil, kin-killing, conflict.[40] Is this, then, a reflection of the extremities to which Roman (and Flavian) epic has now come, where the *exemplum* of familial *pietas* is the avoidance of shedding familial blood? Perhaps it is not surprising that Hypsipyle should seek help at Bacchus' shrine, the twice-born god who was known for his multi-faceted, and at times conflicting, identity,[41] and whose (female) followers included the *furor*-driven women of epic and tragedy, with a reputation for killing their own.[42] Hypsipyle sends-off her father with a dutiful prayer for his safety only for the Lemnians to bequeath upon her the right to rule—her birth right—but under the impression that she has achieved this through killing her father. Thus, though Valerius is at pains to stress the piety of Hypsipyle's actions (*donant solio sceptrisque paternis / ut meritam redeuntque piae sua praemia menti*, 309–310), her individual *pietas* highlights the depths to which *pietas* per se—at least in this Lemnian (pseudo-Roman) world—has plunged. This is a world turned on its head, where women assume the positions of their menfolk by virtue of having killed them, and are described in senatorial—and hence patriarchal—terms as they make-up new laws and inhabit the seats of government: *rauco fremitu sedere parentum / natorumque locis uacuaeque in moenibus urbis / iura nouant* (2.307–309).[43] The reference to those new laws (*iura nouant*, 309) perhaps even containing a hint of that well-known term for Rome's civil-strife: *res nouae*.[44]

40 On the Lemnian episode as a "sort of civil war" see Hershkowitz (1998) 137.

41 On Dionysus and his multifaceted identity see especially Otto (1965) and Carpenter and Faraone (1993).

42 See Lovatt (2013) 363 who notes that Valerius immortalises Hypsipyle "not just as a woman, but always already as a tragic heroine". See too Euripides' *Bacchae* (1114ff.) and Agave's murder of Pentheus. Medea is also associated with Bacchus (e.g. 7.301–306) highlighting the "inverted parallel" between these two women with regard to their display, or lack thereof, of filial *pietas* (Bernstein (2008) 214 n. 70). As with Agave and Pentheus, the tie to Bacchus also reaffirms the destructive power of women in epic/tragedy, especially women in a position of power and especially with regard to the family unit.

43 Hershkowitz (1998) 182 says that Hypsipyle (in V. Fl. 2.249) "conform[s] to the ideal of the pious Roman daughter" but that she is also afflicted by a type of madness.

44 On *res nouae* as a term for civil strife (especially in Tacitus) see, for example, Damon (2010) 271 n. 10.

Medea and Aeetes: The Elite (Roman) Filia

If Hypsipyle's relationship with her father offers a model of filial piety with the unsettling backdrop of kin-killing, then Medea's relationship with Aeetes offers further evidence of the inherent problems in the father/daughter bond that have repercussions beyond epic for Rome: namely the conflict faced by the elite (Roman) *filia* when choosing between her father and 'husband'.

Medea has always been a problematic heroine. As the titular character of tragedy and a dominant presence in epic among other genres, Valerius' heroine was already distinguished among the female characters of ancient literature before she graced his *Argonautica*—an individual who in Seneca (e.g. *Med.* 171 and 910) was even self-consciously aware of her own literary *personae*.[45] Known as a witch and a child-killer among her other identities, Valerius' apparently naïve heroine still bears the burden of her literary past, and thus complicates any attempt by the audience to 'read' her character in light of the traditional elite Roman *filia*.[46]

The force of this literary past is felt throughout the *Argonautica*, through frequent allusions to the woman that Medea will become (5.440–454). Yet in spite of this, and in spite of the fact that Medea herself does not appear until Book 5, Valerius shows a decided preference for alluding to the Colchian in terms that evoke her relationship with her father and her impending betrayal of him, all in a manner that goes far beyond that portrayed in previous literary sources.[47] The first reference to Medea at line 61, for example, appears to play deliberately upon the models of familial relationships that we have already

45 See for example Hine (2000) *ad* 171: "The audience will hear the further meaning 'I shall become the proverbially infamous Medea'". On Medea's wedding to Jason as a 'tipping point' into tragedy see Buckley in this volume.

46 Stover (2003) 124: Medea's entrance into Valerius' narrative causes "generic and thematic tension". On Medea as a Roman wife see Buckley in this volume.

47 See A.R. 3.451–470, 616 ff. and Ov. *Met.* 7.9–158. Apollonius presents Medea as a figure struggling with her growing passion but who spares little thought for her father save for the anger he will feel. Moreover, she shares in this daughterly-betrayal with her sister Chalciope, whose sons by Phrixus in Apollonius' version of the myth are among the Argonauts. The desire of Apollonius' Medea to help her nephews (3.724–739)—even if it is a cover for helping Jason—presents the betrayal of Aeetes as more than a contest between father and stranger for her loyalty; it is a choice of family vs. family. Ovid, like Valerius, presents Medea's choice to help Jason as a clear betrayal of her father, and he stresses the connection between a daughter's *pudor* and the *pietas* that she owes to her father: *ante oculos rectum pietasque pudorque / constiterant* (*Met.* 7.72–73). See also Ov. *Ep.* 12.109: *proditus est genitor, regnum patriamque reliqui.*

seen (namely Vespasian and his sons; Pelias and his family) as she is referred to simply as *regis … filia* (1.61).[48] The second reference benefits from similar embedding: now Jupiter, upset on behalf of his son Hercules, berates Juno for causing Jason and his men to leave the Tirynthian behind on the shore (4.4–14) and in so doing he alludes to Medea as the *impia uirgo* (13–14) who will not go unpunished and the sorrow of Aeetes that will not be unavenged: *dabit impia poenas / uirgo nec Aeetae gemitus patiemur inultos* (4.13–14).[49]

The stress upon Medea's 'impiety' serves as a reminder that however much Aeetes' actions might merit betrayal, Medea's act in doing so runs counter to the ideal of *pietas* and to the appropriate mode of behaviour for the Roman *filia*. That we should view this act in Roman terms—i.e. as being counter to the ideal behaviour of a child towards his/her father—is affirmed by the insertion of another proem (5.217 ff.) which offers a strong contrast to the proem which opened the epic. Gone is the image of familial harmony offered by the Flavians. Now the poet tells us that he has come to the "madness" (*furias*, 219) and "unrighteous treaty of the *daughter*" (*infandaque natae / foedera*, 5.219–220) and he again describes Medea (the future Medea as she crosses the sea in the Argo) as the *impia uirgo* (5.220–221). But he goes one step further: this time, despite referring to Medea's lack of *pietas* as a daughter, he also stresses that Aeetes was a faithless individual who deserved to be abandoned: *ante dolos, ante infidi tamen exsequar astus / Soligenae falli meriti meritique relinqui, / inde canes* (5.222–224). Valerius thus hints at what will become an increasingly paradoxical aspect of Medea's relationship with Aeetes, namely that in betraying her father she has undeniably broken the bonds of *fides* and *pietas* and yet by that act—i.e. by choosing Jason—she counters the perfidy shown by Aeetes towards his Greek guest and aids a cause that will be termed *fas*, righteous,—and Roman—by Venus/Circe (7.231).

Aeetes' status as a 'bad ruler', i.e. one deserving of betrayal, is obvious throughout the epic. Not only does he break *fides* with Jason, but from the

48 Zissos (2008) *ad* 1.61–63: "the early mention of Medea and her supernatural abilities is a noteworthy departure from AR". Also Wijsman (1996) *ad* 5.219 *infanda*: "In VF hints at the fiendish heroine of tragedy are frequent before she enters the stage in her own right … but her *name* is not used before 5.239". Valerius' decision to refer to Medea by her legendary reputation rather than her name in Books 1–4 suggests a juxtaposition of the future Medea with her present (naive) self.

49 On the emphatic nature of Jupiter's utterance here see Murgatroyd (2009) *ad* 13 f. *dabit … / … inultos*. Also Korn (1989) 27–28 n. 2 "die *impietas* der Medea, die Jupiter 4,13 anspricht, besteht in ihrer verbindung mit Jason, die gleichbedeutend ist mit dem verrat am ihrem Vater und Vaterland". Betrayal of her father, Aeetes, is also a betrayal of her State.

outset he is depicted as a king who refuses to listen to his kin or his advisors, advisors whom Valerius refers to as *patres* (5.269), so giving them the aura of senators.[50] Colchis thus serves as an inverted image of Rome; a warning on how the abuse of imperial power—that is the failure to listen to one's kin and one's senate—can result in civil conflict.

If Colchis is a negative mirror-image of Rome (or rather a reflection of Rome at its worst), then Medea's first appearance at lines 5.329–330, appears to confirm her position as an elite *filia* within that 'Roman' state. For in contrast to the image of her powerful mythological *persona*, Medea is depicted as a young girl still under her father's protection, albeit a girl disturbed by nightmares of her future. This nocturnal vision is one beset by familial allusions, with references to her father, her brother and the not-yet-born children whom she will one day kill. But the depiction of Medea's father, given the poet's previous stress on his tyrannical behaviour, is a strange one: *dumque pii petit ora patris* (5.336). For he is described as a *pius pater* (terms more appropriate for *pater / pius Aeneas*), reflecting the focalisation of Medea and the sense of duty that she feels towards him. As Wijsman notes: "[Aeetes] is described as seen through the eyes of the daughter, with due Roman respect".[51]

Medea's actions, then, are framed within the expected mode of behaviour for an elite, Roman, *filia*. Her close bond with Aeetes, although almost invariably depicted from Medea's perspective, is consistently stressed (e.g. she is described as clinging to her parents in a coaxing mood and showering her father's right hand with kisses: *subitoque parentibus haeret / blandior et patriae circumfert oscula dextrae*, 7.122–123). And when she does decide to help Jason and so betray her father, her act is described by the poet as a loss of maidenly shame, *pudor* (e.g. 7.156–157, 177).[52]

Yet there is, as mentioned above, a counter-argument to Medea's failure to show *pietas* towards her father and to act in a manner appropriate for an elite *filia*: namely that in choosing Jason, she chooses a cause that is itself righteous, and decidedly Flavian:

> … patriam inde uocato
> qua redit itque dies, nec nos, o nata, malignus

50 Wijsman (1996) *ad* 5.269 *patres*: "the author provides the Colchians with a senate, just as Rome has one".

51 Wijsman (1996) *ad* 5.336 *pii*.

52 Medea is, of course, not solely responsible for her loss of *pudor*; in one of only four references to *pietas* in Valerius' *Argonautica* (the others coming at 1.244; 5.86; 6.311), Venus offers a girdle (*cingula*) to Juno that will drive away all thoughts of *pietas* and *pudor* (6.471).

clauserit hoc uno semper sub frigore mensis.
fas mihi non habiles, fas et tibi linquere Colchos.

V. Fl. 7.228–231

> Henceforth call this your country, where the sun goes forth and returns again; nor should, O daughter, the malign weather imprison us together forever in this cold. I had the right—as you have the right—to leave the ungovernable Colchians.

Here Venus, in the guise of Medea's aunt Circe, expounds upon the righteous desire of her 'barbarian' niece to leave behind the confines of Colchis and to travel west. 'Circe's' address is an adaptation of Chalciope's speech in Apollonius (A.R. 3.678–680),[53] and Augoustakis among others has highlighted the fact that 'Circe' addresses Medea not as her niece, but as her daughter: '*o nata*' (7.229).[54] In doing so, 'Circe's' speech

> constitutes a paradigm unique in imperial epic, a feature that marks the difference between Flavian epic narratives and the foundational poems of the Augustan age, in particular those of Virgil and Ovid. In this case, the dichotomy between Roman vs. Barbarian, Greek vs. non-Greek, same vs. other is negotiated from the perspective of idealised cosmopolitanism.[55]

Augoustakis' argument is convincing, but we can go further: by addressing Medea as "daughter", Valerius also stresses that this concept of idealised cosmopolitanism is intrinsically linked to the (Roman) family and the importance of the parent who offers advice to the child. Furthermore, in describing to Medea as *fas* the act that will involve the betrayal of her father, which is itself

53 See Perutelli (1997) *ad* 7.230 and Augoustakis (2010) 1–2: "When we compare Valerius Flaccus' adaptation of Chalciope's similar pronouncement from Apollonius' own *Argonautica*, it becomes apparent that the Flavian poet transforms the Greek epic into a Roman saga of the imperial age—by acclimatising in this case Chalciope's words to fit the poet's Roman standpoint".

54 So, too, Medea responds by calling her mother (*mater*, 7.242).

55 Augoustakis (2010) 2. He also observes the interaction between Rome and the limits of its empire during the Flavian period: "[Domitian] fashions himself as the conqueror and pacifier of the barbarian *extrema mundi*. The relationship, however, seems to be one of mutual influence and interaction: the periphery is Romanised, but at the same time certain elements are being adopted by the centre and find their way into the emperor's private abode, the Domus Augustana" (p. 251).

called *nefas* (8.168), 'Circe' implies that an act in support of the empire's centre, (the real) Rome, outweighs the loyalty owed to one's family and—in the case of Valerius' Medea—even one's homeland.[56]

If this choice is the "right" one, however, than the cost remains high. Choosing Jason and the Flavian cause that he represents results in the complete severance of her family bonds, and in a manner that bears a flavour of those Roman *filiae* who married *cum manu*, and so moved from the household of their father to that of their husband.[57] Yet Medea is still the daughter who goes against propriety by choosing a husband of her own volition, and thus the severance from her family is total.[58] In the final book of the epic as we have it, Valerius' Medea agonises over her decision in a way that stresses what she has been forced to leave behind: she is terrified at the thought of her father's threatening rage (*at trepidam in thalamis et iam sua facta pauentem / Colchida circa omnes pariter furiaeque minaeque / patris habent*, 8.1–3); she wishes that she could shower him with kisses and that he could see her tears (*o mihi si profugae, genitor, nunc mille supremos / amplexus, Aeeta, dares fletusque uideres / ecce meos!* 10–12).[59] In leaving with Jason, therefore, Medea is not only moving from one family to another, she is—like the 'problem' daughters of Rome's imperial household—being forced into a form of exile for her 'sins'.[60]

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56 Circe's call for Medea "to become a Roman" (Augoustakis (2010) 252 n. 35) is replicated by Jason who calls upon Medea to show that Augustan ideal—mercy: *ne, precor, infando simile te, uirgo, parenti / gesseris, haut tales decet inclementia uultus* (7.415–416). Thus both Circe and Jason, in encouraging Medea to act in a 'Roman' manner, at the same time encourage her to place claims of the state above those of family.

57 See n. 18 above.

58 Fucecchi (2013) 30 notes that at the end of the poem (as we have it) Medea is also isolated from the crew of the Argo; in effect she is not part of this new 'Roman' world either.

59 In Apollonius' *Argonautica*, when Medea leaves her bedroom to join Jason for the final time, her thoughts are for her mother, sister, and homeland; no mention is made of her father (4.30–33).

60 There is, however, further irony in this 'exile', for back at 5.685–687 Jupiter proclaimed that Perses would eventually rule the kingdom of Colchis: *donec et Aeeten inopis post longa senectae / exilia* (*heu magnis quantum licet impia fatis*) */ nata iuuet Graiusque nepos in regna reponat*. His words show that despite the act of 'impiety' which severs the bond between Medea and her father now, this situation will one day be turned on its head when Medea—an exile from Greece—will eventually choose *pietas* and will help her father by restoring him to his throne, so alluding to the events described in Pacuvius' tragedy *Medus* (on this text see, for example, Boyle (2014) lxx–lxxi). Thus the migration of Valerius' Medea from the periphery to the centre (i.e. 'Rome') is not, it would seem, irreversible.

Conclusion

When viewed with Rome in the background, Valerius' Medea becomes the elite Roman *filia* who mirrors the paradoxical daughters in Rome's literary sources: entrenched within her family household, yet exerting considerable influence within her community; desperate to show *fides* and *pietas* to her father, yet betraying him for a man, Jason. As a legendary *exemplum*, Valerius' Medea was always going to be the daughter who was *expected* to betray her father. But in stressing the bond between father and daughter in the epic—above and beyond any known version of the myth before this point—Valerius is able to leave the monstrous aspects of Medea's *persona* 'hanging' as an ominous warning for the future. His Medea thus remains fixed in a state of semi-naiveté, a girl who, even after she has made the decision to help Jason, is fixated with the father whom she must leave behind.

Flavian epic is full of ironies; full of images of the ideal family unit offset, or even—in the case of Valerius' Hypsipyle undercut—by images of disharmony and kin-killing. Little wonder, then, that Valerius, having chosen to present Medea and Aeetes' relationship in terms reminiscent of Rome's elite families, should question the nature of *pietas* itself. Can Hypsipyle's act of *pietas* in rescuing her father Thoas still be considered exemplary when played out within a civil-war context? Is Medea really an *impia uirgo* if her lack of *pietas* towards her father is actually an act of *clementia* towards Jason (7.415–416), and an act of *fas* (7.231) that sets her on the path towards Rome? The elite households of tragedy and epic and the elite households of Rome, especially the imperial household, all display the tension inherent in this aspect of 'choice', in this question of what constitutes true *fides* and *pietas*. In spite of the image of familial harmony that the Flavians wished to present—harmony that was considered beneficial to the stability of the state as well as to its first-family—, our literary sources would have us believe that even the most elite of families in Rome and in epic were beset by the same family conflicts. Whether that conflict be between fathers and sons (e.g. Vespasian and Domitian), brother and brother (e.g. Titus and Domitian; Pelias and Aeson), or what should have been the closest bond of them all: a father and his daughter (e.g. Rome's elite, imperial, daughters; Medea and Aeetes).

Rome was a *pater*-centric society, and Augustus' assumption of the title *pater patriae* in 2 BC ensured that the *princeps*' role as father of the state and father of the household went in tandem thereafter. The tension between state and family that resulted from this uneasy blend of public and private, tension that had long been a feature of tragedy and epic, thus acquired additional resonance through finding its parallel in Rome's literary texts. In the works of Augustan and post-

Augustan writers, established mythological *exempla* now came with contemporary political 'bite', as the elite daughters of epic (among other genres) and the elite daughters of Rome found themselves faced with similar dilemmas. When viewed within the context of these political and domestic worlds colliding, therefore, Valerius' portrayal of the father/daughter bond, especially that of Medea and Aeetes, is more than a retelling of a well-known story. It is a discussion of the true meaning and worth of those ideals—*pietas* and *fides*—that were as integral to Rome's state as they were to its families.

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Over Her Live Body? Marriage in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Emma Buckley

Introduction

As the text of the Flavian *Argonautica* breaks off, Jason and Medea are in a precarious position. A threatening Colchian fleet under the leadership of Absyrtus has met the Argonauts on the island of Peuce, and Jason's comrades are keen to abandon Medea, pointing out that their leader is exposing them to danger for the sake of a mere foreign girl (*externa pro uirgine*, V. Fl. 8.386). This passage closely recalls the events of Apollonius' *Argonautica*, where the Hellenistic Argonauts—there deeming Medea "the cause of strife" (τὸ γὰρ πέλεν ἀμφήριστον, A.R. 4.345; cf. V. Fl. 3.627)—suggest that her ultimate fate (to be returned to her father, or to continue on to Greece in the Argo) be subject to the arbitration of a king (A.R. 4.338–349). Both Medeas respond with a passionate speech directed at Jason alone, reminding him of the service she has done him, the promises he has made (V. Fl. 8.415–444; A.R. 4.350–390). Yet the characterization of the two is very different. The Apollonian Medea—already a terrifyingly destructive figure barely able to control her anger—rails against the perfidy of her lover and concludes with a menacing threat:

> ... "ἐκ δέ σε πάτρης
> αὐτίκ' ἐμαί σ' ἐλάσειαν Ἐρινύες: οἷα καὶ αὐτὴ
> σῇ πάθον ἀτροπίῃ. τὰ μὲν οὐ θέμις ἀκράαντα
> ἐν γαίῃ πεσέειν. μάλα γὰρ μέγαν ἤλιτες ὅρκον,
> νηλεές: ἀλλ' οὔ θήν μοι ἐπιλλίζοντες ὀπίσσω
> δὴν ἔσσεσθ' εὔκηλοι ἕκητί γε συνθεσιάων."
>
> A.R. 4.385–390

> "May my Furies drive you straight from your homeland, because of what I have suffered through your heartlessness. What I say the gods will not leave unaccomplished—it cannot fall idly to the ground—for you have broken a very solemn oath, pitiless one! But not for much longer will you sit here happily and laugh at me—for all your agreements!"[1]

1 All translations of Apollonius' *Argonautica* are from Hunter (1993a).

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The Flavian Medea takes a rather different tack. Appealing at the outset instead on the Roman grounds of *pietas* and what is *fas*, Medea's speech does not just remind Jason of the oaths he has made, traditional to perfidious lovers: she also appeals to her status in Roman law as Jason's wife; invites him sarcastically to divorce her only in Thessaly (*sperne* = *repudia*); and even draws the distinction between the legal obligations a husband has to his wife *in manu mariti*, and the *potestas* a conqueror has over a war-slave.[2]

> 'me quoque, **uir**, tecum Minyae, fortissima pubes,
> nocte dieque mouent? liceat cognoscere tandem,
> si modo Peliacae non sum captiua carinae
> nec dominos decepta sequor consultaque uestra
> fas audire mihi. uereor,[3] **fidissime coniunx**,
> nil equidem, miserere tamen promissaque serua
> usque ad Thessalicos saltem conubia portus
> inque tua me **sperne** domo. scis te mihi certe,
> non socios **iurasse** tuos. hi reddere forsan
> fas habeant, tibi non eadem **permissa potestas**
> teque simul mecum ipsa traham: non sola reposcor
> uirgo nocens atque hac pariter rate fugimus omnes.'
>
> V. Fl. 8.415–426

> "Do the heroic Minyae discuss me too by day and by night with you, my husband? Then let me know at last, if indeed I am not the captive of your Pelian ship, nor, deceived, I obey masters, and it is right for me to hear your thoughts. I fear nothing at all, most faithful spouse: yet have some pity for me and keep your marriage-vows at least until Thessalian harbours; divorce me in your own home. You know that you at least have made a vow to me, though your comrades have not. Perhaps they could lawfully hand me back, but the same power has not been granted to you. I will drag you with me: I, a guilty girl, am not demanded back alone: on this ship we have all fled together."[4]

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2 Cf. On *sperne/repudia* cf. Liberman (2002) 393, citing Treggiari (1991) 435–441; on Medea as slave here cf. also V. Fl. 8.443–444, and for the *uitae necisque potestas* of masters over war-captives see Nyquist (2013) 7–8. Of course, for the marriage to be legal Medea should have the consent of her *paterfamilias* Aeetes (cf. Treggiari (1991) 170–171) and indeed in another major divagation from Apollonius, Medea is already engaged to the Albanian tyrant Styrus (V. Fl. 8.153).

3 *merear* Ehlers (1980).

4 Translations of Valerius are my own, adapted from Mozley (1934).

The text breaks off while Jason is still embarking on a stuttering reply—"Do you think I deserved something? Do you think I wanted such things to happen?" ('*mene aliquid meruisse putas, me talia uelle?*' V. Fl. 8.467)—but even as it stands, this broken interchange sharply reflects the Roman reorientation of the Greek mythological epic: this Medea may be painted as 'foreigner' by the Argonauts but she speaks and behaves like a Roman *uirgo* conditioned by the demands of *pietas*, within a world which is recognizably Roman in its social hierarchy and power-structures.[5] But Valerius does not just 'Romanize' here: he also effects a profound dislocation from the plot of Apollonius' epic, for while Medea's speech alludes to the equivalent one her predecessor made under threat of abandonment, in the Hellenistic epic the marriage of Jason and Medea takes place only *after* they have dealt with the threat of Absyrtus. Medea's angry speech to Jason is followed immediately by her "deadly speech" (οὐλοὸς μῦθος) in which she outlines the plot to destroy her brother (A.R. 4.411–420): only a later confrontation with another set of Colchians provokes the eventual wedding.

Valerius' decision to re-work Apollonian marriage in this way has been written off as simply another example of the 'simplification' of his chief *modello-esemplare*, the Hellenistic epic, while his choice to write a 'Roman' Medea conforms more broadly to Valerius' energetic engagement with his chief *modello-codice*, Virgil's *Aeneid*.[6] Yet in this chapter I will argue that the wedding serves as a kind of microcosm for a much deeper reflection on the role of marriage in constituting Roman epic. A policy of dislocating allusion to Apollonius' *Argonautica*, forcing Valerius' plot to 'jump the rails' of the Hellenistic source, together with another kind of dislocation—Valerius' overt Romanization of an originary epic set chronologically before the events of the *Iliad*—together form a programmatic reflection on the role of marriage in epos: foundation-block of Homeric epic and a striking presence in Flavian epic, but conspicuously omitted or parodied in the previous Roman tradition.[7] Valerius' marriage responds

5 On 'Roman' Medea see esp. now Zissos (2012) and Stocks in this volume; on the 'Roman-ness' of the world of the *Argonautica* through kinship structures, esp. *patria potestas*, see Bernstein (2008) 30–63, (2014). Note, e.g. that Thessaly has not just a tyrant but also *populus* and *patres* (cf. V. Fl. 1.71–73 with Zissos (2008) 123–124), while Colchis also appoints senators (V. Fl. 5.464 *legit ... patres* with Wijsman (1996) 222).

6 On Valerius' reliance on Apollonius for the *quid* (*modello-esemplare*) versus Virgil for the *quale* (*modello-codice*) of his epic, above all in the creation of a traditionally 'heroic' Jason and a Romanized Medea, see esp. Hershkowitz (1998); Davis (2010); Stover (2012); Castelletti (2014).

7 For the important re-emphasis on marriage in Statius' *Thebaid* see Newlands in this volume;

acutely to the crucial role of Apollonius' wedding in reflecting on marriage's role in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. But it also reacts to a Roman tradition which has removed marriage from the picture, building itself not just on dynastic alliances never achieved within the narrative but also over the 'dead bodies' of other transgressive females.[8] Valerius' epic wedding, I shall suggest, serves as a 'tipping point' into tragedy, accelerating the Apollonian epic to make the wedding at Peuce not just the origin story for the *Medea* but also, at least figuratively, its *telos*. In so doing, Valerius also—and much more provocatively—writes the wedding of Jason and Medea as a much broader revisionary origin-story for epic itself. The result is not just a deeply disturbing wedding ceremony in *Argonautica* 8, but also a Flavian epic that now attributes empire and epos to the *survival* of the disruptive female.

Epic and Tragedy: Reading for the Plot in Apollonius and Virgil

First, though, it is worth sketching the place Valerius' most important exemplary models, Apollonius' *Argonautica* and Virgil's *Aeneid*, have in an epic tradition which from its inception makes marriage central to plot. Apollonius' wedding takes place after a second encounter with Colchian pursuers, who catch up with Jason and Medea on the island of Corcyra after Absyrtus' murder and demand the return of Medea to her father (A.R. 4.982–1007). The Phaeacian queen Arete reveals that her husband Alcinous will permit Medea to continue to travel with the Argonauts only if she is married. If she remains a virgin, Alcinous has decreed, Medea must return to her family (1110–1120). Therefore Jason and Medea secretly wed the same evening in the sacred cave of Macris, attended by nymphs sent by Hera and the ritual armour-clash of the other Argonauts. The wedding is not entirely happy: both Jason and Medea would have preferred to marry in Iolcos (1161–1163), the narrator remarks, and though their souls melt with love, that love is accompanied by the fear that the next day Alcinous will judge against them (τῶ καὶ τοὺς γλυκερῇ περ ἰαινομένους φιλότητι / δεῖμ' ἔχεν, εἰ τελέοιτο διάκρισις Ἀλκινόοιο, 1168–1169).[9] Nevertheless, this wedding—

in the *Achilleid*, Bernstein (2008) 130–131; on female discord in Flavian epic, Keith (2013). While marriage has a significant role in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* this chapter limits itself to mythological epic: on Silius, less work has been done but cf. Cowan (2009).

8 See Keith (2000), esp. 101–131.

9 For more on the already very strained relationship between Medea and Jason as background to this wedding, see DeForest (1994) 128–129.

rushed and unsatisfactory as it is—clearly has paradigmatic importance for the narrative as a whole. For the narrator connects the *telos* of the epic—the attainment of the Fleece—with the wedding itself:

> ἔνθα τότ' ἐστόρεσαν λέκτρον μέγα: τοῖο δ' ὕπερθεν
> χρύσεον αἰγλῆεν κῶας βάλον, ὄφρα πέλοιτο
> τιμήεις τε γάμος καὶ ἀοίδιμος.
>
> A.R. 4.1141–1143

> There it was that they prepared a great couch; over it they threw the radiant golden fleece so that the wedding should be honoured and become the subject of song.

> Ἀρχόμενος σέο, Φοῖβε, παλαιγενέων κλέα φωτῶν
> μνήσομαι, οἳ Πόντοιο κατὰ στόμα καὶ διὰ πέτρας
> Κυανέας βασιλῆος ἐφημοσύνῃ Πελίαο
> χρύσειον μετὰ κῶας ἐύζυγον ἤλασαν Ἀργώ.
>
> A.R. 1.1–4

> Taking my start from you, Phoebus, I shall recall the glorious deeds of men of long ago who propelled the well-benched Argo through the mouth of Pontus and between the Dark Rocks to gain the golden fleece.

In these few words Apollonius frames his own Argonautic 'marriage' against the Homeric tradition: the Phaeacian backdrop and the desire for *nostos* clearly cast the marriage of Jason and Medea against the potential marriage of Odysseus and Nausicaa in the *Odyssey*, but also the true *telos* of Odysseus' journey, his arrival home and reunion with Penelope, celebrated when they return together to their bridal couch (*Od.* 23.292–296).[10] The Fleece's quality as ἀοίδιμος ("a subject for song"), meanwhile, also recalls the *Iliad*, and Helen's metapoetically aware conversation with Hector which describes her marriage to Paris—ordained by Zeus but pure woe to her—as subject of song:

> "δᾶερ ἐμεῖο κυνὸς κακομηχάνου ὀκρυοέσσης,
> ὥς μ' ὄφελ' ἤματι τῷ ὅτε με πρῶτον τέκε μήτηρ

10 On Apollonius' relationship with the Phaeacian episode of the *Odyssey*, see Knight (1995) 251–252; on the scholia's belief (*ad Od.* 23.296) that the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope is 'goal' (*telos*) of the epic, see Foley (2010); de Jong (2001) 561–562; on more recent dissatisfaction with this closure see Crotty (1994) 205–207.

οἴχεσθαι προφέρουσα κακὴ ἀνέμοιο θύελλα
εἰς ὄρος ἢ εἰς κῦμα πολυφλοίσβοιο θαλάσσης,
ἔνθά με κῦμ' ἀπόερσε πάρος τάδε ἔργα γενέσθαι. …
ἀλλ' ἄγε νῦν εἴσελθε καὶ ἕζεο τῷδ' ἐπὶ δίφρῳ
δᾶερ, ἐπεί σε μάλιστα πόνος φρένας ἀμφιβέβηκεν
εἵνεκ' ἐμεῖο κυνὸς καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἕνεκ' ἄτης,
οἷσιν ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε κακὸν μόρον, ὡς καὶ ὀπίσσω
ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' ἀοίδιμοι ἐσσομένοισι."

Hom. *Il.* 6.344–348, 354–358

"O Hector, you're my brother, and me, / I'm a horrible, conniving bitch. / I wish that on that day my mother bore me / some evil wind had come, carried me away, / and swept me off, up into the mountains, / or to the waves of the tumbling, crashing sea. / Then I would've died before this happened. […] But come in, sit on this chair, my brother, / since this trouble really weighs upon your mind—/ all because I was a bitch—because of that / and Paris' folly, Zeus gives us an evil fate, / so we may be subjects for men's songs / in human generations yet to come."[11]

The marriage of Medea is not just the end of epic, then, an 'Odyssean' *telos*: it is also an 'Iliadic' origin, a cause for song.

In this combinatorial imitation, Apollonius offers a typically deconstructive response to the foundational role marriage plays in Homeric epos, the context in which heroic masculinity and epic exemplarity can be memorialized in song. Indeed, Apollonius invokes these paradigms only to problematize them, for it is far from clear that this moment—a subject for song though it may be—has much to do with a larger "plan of Zeus" (Διὸς βουλή, *Il.* 1.5).[12] The plans of that deity are notoriously inscrutable in the Hellenistic epic, and it is Hera who has conspicuously taken charge of the narrative from *Argonautica* 3 on.[13] Moreover the *nostos* awaiting Jason and Medea will not constitute the culmination of a happy reunion, but rather the introduction to a tragic future. Though there is no explicit prolepsis of the future in the wedding episode itself, from this point

11 Tr. Johnston (2007).

12 As Goldhill (1991) 120 points out.

13 On the obscurity of Zeus' purpose in Apollonius' epic see Feeney (1991) 93–97; Dräger (2001) argues that the narrator gradually reveals that the whole quest has been motivated by the wrath of Zeus; on the importance of female divinities in the Hellenistic *Argonautica*, including Hera's role in the wedding at Corcyra, see Feeney (1991) 57–65; Hunter (1993b) 75–100; Mori (2012).

of view Apollonius creates a new paradigm: the wedding is not just *telos* to a Fleece won by erotic guile rather than martial prowess, but also an origin-story for epic's transformation into tragedy.[14]

It is perhaps no wonder, then, that Roman epic deliberately avoids the troubling associations marriage brings to the epic picture. Rather, the celebration of masculinity encoded in the heroic deeds of Roman epic—the stuff of *fama*—builds upon the connection already in Greek epic between the guilty female and war, a guilt specifically vocalized when Helen calls herself the "evil-devising dog" who is "cause of war" (*Il.* 6.344). Virgil, Valerius' most influential literary precursor, makes Lavinia *casus belli* in Italy (cf. esp. *A.* 6.93, where the Sibyl calls Lavinia "the cause of such great evil", *causa mali tanti*): in the *Aeneid* the secure *telos* of a dynastic alliance through marriage is often hinted at but always deferred beyond the scope of the narrative itself.[15] At the same time the *Aeneid* creates, only to dispense with, a series of chaos-inducing females at both the human and divine level who wreck the order that has been imposed by men, from Creusa at Troy to the mother of Euryalus in *Aeneid* 9.[16] Most notoriously of all, the epic's end balances human conflict with a partial 'reconciliation' between Juno and Jupiter, in a scene in which the most disruptive force of the entire epic, Juno, agrees no longer to create the strife which enables the poem's continuation.[17]

Within this scheme, the central *coniugium* of Virgil's epic—the union of Dido and Aeneas—becomes the crucial testing-ground for the *Aeneid*'s adaptive response to the role of marriage in Greek *epos*. Opinions differ when it comes to labelling what happened in the cave during the storm; the narrator's overt denial that a wedding occurred is balanced against the undeniable marriage-like elements:[18]

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14 Levin (1971) 24–33 charts the Hellenistic epic's scrupulous avoidance of the future, but tragic foreshadowing through allusion to (above all) Euripides' *Medea* is also part of Apollonius' epic: see Goldhill (1991) 320–321; Hunter (1993b) 123.

15 On the importance of the dynastic marriage alliance, cf. esp. *A.* 6.763–766, 7.272 with Keith (2000) 49–50, 74–75. On the important role females play in marriage-contracts in the *Aeneid*, together with the 'real-world' application of their networking, see Keith (2006).

16 On the narratological effects of the incursions of female divinities, esp. Juno, see Feeney (1991) 130–134; Hardie (1993); on the female as agent of disorder more generally in the *Aeneid*, see Nugent (1992); Keith (2000).

17 Feeney (1984).

18 See Gutting (2006) 272–273 on the question whether this is *coniugium* or travesty of *coniugium*, with full bibliography on the vexed topic: see esp. Moles (1984); O'Hara (2011) 38.

... prima et Tellus et pronuba Iuno
dant signum; fulsere ignes et conscius aether
conubiis summoque ulularunt uertice Nymphae.
ille dies primus leti primusque malorum
causa fuit; neque enim specie famaue mouetur
nec iam furtiuum Dido meditatur amorem:
coniugium uocat, hoc praetexit nomine culpam.

Verg. *A.* 4.166–172

Primeval Earth and Juno *Pronuba* give the signal: lightning flashed, the air bore witness, and the nymphs on the ridge's height wailed. That was the first day of death, that day was the cause of evil; for she is moved by neither appearance nor rumour, and does not now consider her love a secret thing: she calls it "marriage", and covers up her crime with that name.

What *is* clear is that even as Virgil writes what is conspicuously a *non*-marriage for Dido and Aeneas here, this union owes a great deal to Apollonius' marriage.[19] Virgil has drawn from the Hellenistic epic not simply the wedding itself, but also the directing divine apparatus for this episode, as Virgil's Juno intervenes to enforce her own preferred alternative 'plot' to the epic—an ending to the *Aeneid* in which Aeneas never reaches Italy at all—in a manner conspicuously reminiscent not just of Hera's behaviour in *Argonautica* 4, but also of her collusion with Aphrodite in *Argonautica* 3.[20] Of course, the marriage which Juno has engineered is doomed to failure, as Dido dies to save not just the epic narrative but also the Roman cultural order itself.[21] But in her death her status converges not just with her necessary excision from the plot for the success of the epic, but also with a broader pattern of Roman identity politics in which the progress of the nation is built from the very beginning over a series of female deaths.[22] The epic tradition that begins with Helen, "guilty cause" of the Trojan

19 See Nelis (2001) 148–152.

20 As Nelis (2001) 150–152 has shown.

21 See Keith (2000) 114–115: Dido is "accomplice to the narrative logic that requires her death [...] [Dido's death] confirms not only that the queen must die for her sexual and social transgressions (of Roman norms), but also that she must die so that the man may live. The death of Dido thus emerges as a requirement for Aeneas' foundation of the Roman cultural order."

22 On the death of the female as stimulus to the progression of Rome outside of epic see esp. Joshel (1992) on Livy.

war and *Iliad* alike, then, has diverged strikingly: the narrator's accusation that the day of the union of Dido and Aeneas was *leti primus* and *malorum causa* (*A*. 4.169–170) allows for Dido's own story to conclude in tragedy, while Aeneas and the epic plot—divorced from any irregular union—can continue on their way.

Valerius' Wedding

It might seem that this brief sketch of the role of marriage in epic has taken us some distance from the Flavian *Argonautica* and the wedding celebrated at Peuce in the eighth book of the epic, especially given that at first glance Valerius overtly departs from both the Apollonian and Virgilian models here. In a nod to the Hellenistic source, the Flavian couple also wed in a cave (V. Fl. 8.256), but no sooner have Jason and Medea reclined on the Golden Fleece than they are forced to vacate it as Absyrtus gate-crashes the wedding (256–257; 275–276): no matter where Valerius might have intended his epic to stop, the marriage of Jason and Medea is clearly no satisfactory *telos* to the Flavian epic. Furthermore, Jason's heroic stature is not obviously diminished by this union with Medea: the hero's martial virility, together with his dazzling attractiveness, is evoked in simile by reference to two heroic exemplars, Mars and Hercules (227–231), the latter a pervasive figure for comparison for Jason throughout the epic, and last evoked in simile when Jason captured the Fleece, just as Hercules had lifted the Nemean lion-skin onto his shoulder (125–126).[23] This is a far cry from Apollonius' epic, where Jason's delight is compared to a young girl rejoicing at the moonlight's play on her dress (A.R. 4.167–171).[24]

Such an approach to writing the wedding fits neatly into a pattern most recently argued for by Timothy Stover, in which Valerius' project is to write Jason as an *alter* Aeneas even as his epic stands as *Aeneid* for Vespasianic Rome.[25] But there are significant differences with the Virgilian model too, most remarkably in the fact that this marriage takes place not under compulsion,

23 Lazzarini (2012) 217–218 argues that the condensing is part of Valerius' larger strategy of "banalizzazzione": cf. Venini (1971) 582–597.

24 See Bremer (1987) for the nuptial connotations of this simile; on Jason and Herakles in Apollonius' epic, see Hunter (1993b) 25–41; Kouremenos (1996) 238–240. On Jason and Hercules in the Flavian *Argonautica* see Hershkowitz (1998) 72–78 and *passim*.

25 Stover (2012); on the centrality of the Dido-Aeneas relationship to Valerius' Medea-Jason partnership elsewhere, see Stover (2003).

but at the instigation of Jason himself (V. Fl. 8.220–223), who acts to fulfil his oath in a marriage ceremony which is clearly Roman, not Greek (243–246), and presided over by Venus (together with Cupid), who takes charge of Medea in a role that is recalled in the *epithalamium* of Statius' *Siluae* 1.2.[26] Jason's wedding is clearly 'legitimate' in a way that Aeneas' never was.

It is all the more striking, then, that the happiness of the wedding guests and the virility of the groom are not the only features of this wedding. The happy occasion is shot through with a far more disquieting tone that resurrects but goes far beyond the negativity of the Apollonian source:[27]

> adsunt unanimes Venus hortatorque Cupido;
> suscitat adfixam maestis Aeetida curis,
> ipsa suas illi croceo subtegmine uestes
> induit, ipsa suam duplicem Cytherea coronam
> donat et arsuras alia cum uirgine gemmas.
> tum nouus impleuit uultus honor ac sua flauis
> reddita cura comis graditurque oblita malorum.
> sic ubi Mygdonios planctus sacer abluit Almo
> laetaque iam Cybele festaeque per oppida taedae,
> quis modo tam saeuos adytis fluxisse cruores
> cogitet aut ipsi qui iam meminere ministri?
> inde ubi sacrificas cum coniuge uenit ad aras
> Aesonides unaque adeunt pariterque precari
> incipiunt, ignem Pollux undamque iugalem
> praetulit et dextrum pariter uertuntur in orbem.
> sed neque se pingues tum candida flamma per auras
> explicuit nec tura uidet concordia Mopsus
> promissam nec stare fidem, breue tempus amorum.
> odit utrumque simul, simul et miseratur utrumque
> et tibi tum nullos optauit, barbara, natos.
>
> V. Fl. 8.232–251

> Of one mind Venus and Cupid the inspirer are present: Cupid rouses Medea, frozen with sad cares, and Venus dresses her in her own golden robes, bestows on her her very own double-crown and the jewels destined to blaze on another girl. Then a new bloom transformed her expression,

26 On these elements as part of Roman marriage ritual see Lazzarini (2012) ad loc.
27 See most recently Davis (2010) 7–13.

> and her golden hair was styled: she steps forward, forgetful of evil. As the sacred river Almo washes away Mygdonian weeping—Cybele is now happy, the festal torches proceed through the city—who now thinks of such savage bloodshed that has flowed at her shrines: do even the devotees of Cybele remember? Then, when Jason has come to the sacrificial altars with his bride and they approach together and begin to pray at the same time, Pollux bears the ritual nuptial fire and water, and together they turn in a clock-wise circle. But no clear flame wound its way through the pitchy air, nor did the incense foretell harmonious union: Mopsus sees that the promised vow shall not stand, that the time of love will be short. At the same time he hates both, and pities both: and he hoped then that you would have no children, barbarian girl.

Where Apollonius' wedding serves to meditate on a generality of human life, the fact that joy is never unaccompanied long by sorrow (A.R. 4.1165–1167), in Valerius' epic much more overt and gloomy foreshadowing is in place, above all in the garments Medea is given by Venus to wear—the golden robes, double crown and jewels "destined to burn on another girl", clearly Creusa at Corinth—and the doom-laden reaction of the sacrificial fire, together with Mopsus' pessimistic recognition that the marriage will be short, and hope that the marriage will be childless (cf. V. Fl. 8.247–251). These images recall not only the ominous prophecy of Mopsus at the outset of the epic,

> ' … quaenam aligeris secat anguibus auras
> caede madens? quos ense ferit? miser, eripe paruos,
> Aesonide! cerno et thalamos ardere iugales!'
>
> V. Fl. 1.224–226

> "Who carves the air on winged dragons, steeped in gore? Whom does she strike with the sword? Wretched Jason, rescue the little ones! And I see bridal chambers on fire!"

but also at one remove the ultimate *telos* of the Medea-story, the moment where, as Creusa and Corinth burn together, Medea achieves her final revenge:

> … haec tum miracula Colchis
> struxerat Ignipotens nondum noscentibus, ille
> quis labor, aligeris aut quae secet anguibus auras
> caede madens. odere tamen uisusque reflectunt.
>
> V. Fl. 5.451–454

> Vulcan had built these marvels for the Colchians, who did not yet know what that work was or who carves the air on winged dragons, steeped in gore; yet they hate it and turn away their gaze.

Valerius' marriage, then, is getting ahead of itself not just because it has outpaced its Apollonian model, but also because it has accelerated the transition to tragedy: it stages a battle between the epic *labor* of the first half of the *Argonautica* and the devolution into not just elegy but also tragedy.[28] Indeed, Valerius himself has predicted this: the marriage works precisely as a microcosm of the struggle the epic has had since the Argonauts' arrival in Colchis to avoid diversion into the "other poetry" (*cantus alios*, V. Fl. 5.217), foreshadowed by Valerius in his proem-in-the-middle: *uentum ad furias infandaque natae / foedera et horrenda trepidam sub uirgine puppem* ("We have come to insanity, to the unutterable pact with the daughter, to Argo shuddering at the presence of the monstrous girl", 218–219; cf. 8.202–206).

It could then be argued that Valerius' marriage offers a knowing nod to the 'originary' purpose of Apollonius' wedding, marking the 'tipping point' into tragedy unspoken in the Hellenistic text. After the wedding, Medea is envisaged as Erinys by the Argonauts (V. Fl. 8.396), the infuriate creature she will become in Seneca's tragedy.[29] When Medea confronts Jason after the wedding, stressing her own guilt even as she implicates him in her crimes at the end of the *Argonautica*—*non sola reposcor / uirgo nocens, atque hac pariter rate omnes* ("I, a guilty girl, am not demanded back alone: on this ship we have all fled together", 426)—she recalls two running motifs of the tragic *Medea* which are

28 Such tragic foreshadowing—and Valerius' obsession with gloomy presentiment more generally—has long been noted. See esp. Fuhrer (1998); Hershkowitz (1998) 13–34 examines various internal and external prolepses; Gärtner (1994) argues that the foreshadowing function of Valerian simile is crucial. It is tempting also to see some influence from Roman republican tragedy: Zissos (2012) argues that the pointedly Roman father-daughter relationship in Valerius is modelled on Pacuvius' *Medus*, while Accius' *Medea siue Argonautae*, which draws not just on Sophocles *Scythae* but also on Apollonius *Argonautica* 4, makes the wedding and murder of Absyrtus its subject, and, as Manuwald (2015) 179 argues, the remaining fragments of this play reveal a special interest in family relationships too.

29 Seneca's Medea begins by calling first on the *Di coniugales* ("gods of marriage", *Med.* 1), then on the Erinyes, the goddesses who avenge evil (*sceleris ultrices deae*, 13), before finally turning to her own *animus* to wreak evil (42). Cf. Gill (1987) 35–36 who notes that Medea is 'agent' or 'collaborator' with the *antiqua Erinys* (*Med.* 965 f.) whom she recognizes as she embarks on the revenge itself (and note that Medea is accompanied by the Erinys at V. Fl. 7.461–464 when she embarks on *nefas* for the first time): for more on Seneca's *Medea* and the *Argonautica* see Buckley (2014) 90–92.

vocalized in her central confrontation with Jason in that text, her history of both flight and guilt-inducing crime on Jason's behalf:[30]

> **Med.** fugimus, Iason, fugimus. hoc non est nouum,
> mutare sedes; causa fugiendi noua est:
> pro te solebam fugere. …
> … **Ias.** restat hoc unum insuper,
> tuis ut etiam sceleribus fiam nocens.
> **Med.** tua illa, tua sunt illa: cui prodest scelus,
> is fecit. omnes coniugem infamem arguant,
> solus tuere, solus insontem uoca:
> tibi innocens sit quisquis est pro te nocens.
> Sen. *Med.* 447–449, 498–503

> Medea: We have fled, Jason: we are fleeing. It's not new for me to change my home: the cause of flight is new. I used to flee for you.
> … Jason: This one thing alone remains, that even I should become guilty because of your crimes.
> Medea: They are your crimes, yours: the one who benefits from a crime commits it. All might declare that your wife is infamous: you alone must protect her, alone call her innocent. Let whoever who is guilty *for* you be innocent *to* you.

Though Valerius may not have intended to finish the *Argonautica* where he did, in another sense the epic's final moments offer already a peculiarly appropriate end-point: a recognizably tragic scene, as a vacillating Jason attempts to placate an enraged Medea (*mota … ira*, 8.464).

The wedding does not just serve as 'tipping point' for transformation into tragedy, however, for the epic narrative has been contaminated with tragedy right from our first meeting with Medea in the narrative proper, which also obviously casts the girl as the transgressive *uirgo* who will stand in the way of the successful *telos* of the epic:

30 The 'flight' motif comes back with a vengeance at the end of the play: *lumina huc tumida alleua, / ingrate Iason. coniugem agnoscis tuam? / sic fugere soleo* ("Raise your swollen eyes to me, ungrateful Jason. Do you recognize your wife? This is how I'm used to fleeing", *Med.* 1019–1021). In addition to Medea's repeated declarations of guilt (cf. esp. *Med.* 246 (*sum nocens*) and 280 (*totiens nocens sum facta, sed numquam mihi.*)), cf. Davis (2010) 10, who adduces *Med.* 272–274 and 535 on the theme of shared guilt with V. Fl. 8.426, and points out that V. Fl. 8.437–440 (a reminder of Medea's help) anticipates *Med.* 466–476, 527–528.

forte deum uariis per noctem territa monstris
senserat ut pulsas tandem Medea tenebras,
rapta toris primi iubar ad placabile Phoebi
ibat et horrendas lustrantia flumina noctes.
namque soporatos tacitis in sedibus artus
dum premit alta quies nullaeque in uirgine curae,
uisa pauens castis Hecates excedere lucis,
dumque pii petit ora patris, stetit arduus inter
pontus et ingenti circum stupefacta profundo,
fratre tamen conante sequi. mox stare pauentes
uiderat intenta pueros nece seque trementem
spargere caede manus et lumina rumpere fletu.

V. Fl. 5.329–340

By chance when Medea (terrified by various divine portents throughout the night) sensed that at last dawn had come, she threw herself out of bed and made for the friendly gleam of the sunrise and the river to wash away her horrifying nightmares. For while deep slumber weighed down sleepy limbs in her silent house, and the girl was yet carefree, she seemed to be leaving the chaste groves of Hecate, alarmed: and while she sought out her pious father, a deep sea stood between them and she was alarmed by the great deep around her, though her brother, however, attempted pursuit. Next she had seen herself, shaking, spatter her hands with gore and her eyes erupt into tears.

This introduction to Medea obviously activates the Homeric epic 'marriage' model of *Odyssey* 6, where the maiden Nausicaa, prompted in her sleep by the intervention of Athene, sets out in the morning with her handmaidens to wash clothes by the river, only to bump into Odysseus. The close parallels with Medea, who will also make for the river at dawn with her maidens, there meeting Jason—the man who will indeed become her husband—are clear, and are of course also inspired by Apollonius' own re-working of the Nausicaa episode in *his* version of the meeting of Jason and Medea in *Argonautica* 3.[31] Apollonius'

31 This meeting, also engineered by Athene, opens up a *leitmotif* of the Phaeacian episode (*Od.* 6.27, 66, 244–245)—Odysseus' potential suitability as husband for the girl—a source of tension finally resolved when Alcinous offers his daughter to Odysseus in marriage (7.311–315). On Valerius and Homer here cf. Wijsman (1996) *ad* 5.378–390; on the Dido-parallel, itself of course already modelled on the Nausicaa episode, see Perutelli (1995); Hershkowitz (1998) 95–97; Stover (2003) 126–127.

Medea, too, following Homeric precedent, is assaulted by "deceitful dreams" that combine prophecy with a realistic, erotically-charged edge (A.R. 3.616–633): though she has no direct communication with the divine, as Nausicaa does in the *Odyssey*, the decision she makes in her dream to aid "the stranger", choosing him over her own parents, is clearly prophetic.[32]

But just as striking as the similarities of Valerius' introduction to Medea are the differences here: in place of the latent eroticism of the Homeric source, whose heroine is motivated by her semi-conscious recognition of her own readiness for marriage, the dominant tenor of the dreams Medea has is shockingly grim: her night-terrors are nothing less than the programme for her future tragedy.[33] The dream of Valerius' Medea serves, then, as doublet to the erotically-charged and prophetic precedent of the Apollonian epic. But crucially it once again gets ahead of the Hellenistic source: the final part of Medea's dream, the struggle between duty and desire, culminating with her abandonment of her parents, becomes simply the *first* action in the Flavian Medea's vision, which climaxes with the end-point of the tragic *Medea* and which replaces the erotic undercurrent of the Apollonian (and Homeric) models with one more starkly focused on the later phases of Medea's future relationship.[34] Right from the beginning the chronology of the Apollonian source has been over-ridden: the dream of Apollonius' Medea comes *after* her first meeting with Jason, but Valerius' *uirgo* dreams a tragedy to come before she has even met Jason for the first time.[35] Such chronological disjunction is pressed further in the imposition of another important literary model for Valerius' introduction of Medea from the Hellenistic *Argonautica*, the blood-spattered dream of

32 Hunter (1989) 164. On the difference between the content of Apollonian and Homeric dreams see Knight (1995) 187; Giangrande (2000) esp. 110–114 on the *theoretikos* (i.e. figurative) function of Medea's dream. On tragic undercurrents in the Apollonian dream, especially Euripides' *Medea* and *Iphigenia among the Taurians*, see Kessels (1982); Walde (1998) 90; Sansone (2000).

33 Cf. Gärtner (1996) 301; Hershkowitz (1998) 19.

34 This Apollonian model is split and redoubled by Valerius to provide a model for an answering dream at 7.141–147: cf. Gärtner (1996) 302. On the intertextual makeup of Medea's dream, see Perutelli (1995); Walde (1998) 101–104. On Flavian epic dreams see also Keith and Newlands in this volume.

35 The central episode of *Argonautica* 5—the meeting of Jason and Medea—is modelled around the same strategy of allusive disjunction, as the 'chance' meeting of Jason and Medea (V. Fl. 5.329–454) is written through the *second* meeting of Apollonius' Jason and Medea, at which Medea gives Jason the magic potion which will enable him to complete the tasks set by Aeetes (A.R. 3.947–1145).

Circe (A.R. 4.662–669), which in the Greek epic is introduced after Jason and Medea have fled Colchis with the Fleece, and arrive in Aeaea, only to encounter Circe:

> ... ἔνθα δὲ Κίρκην
> εὗρον ἁλὸς νοτίδεσσι κάρη ἐπιφαιδρύνουσαν:
> τοῖον γὰρ νυχίοισιν ὀνείρασιν ἐπτοίητο.
>
> A.R. 4.662–664

> There they found Kirke purifying her head in the flowing salt waters because she had been much disturbed by dreams during the night.

Circe's symbolic vision does not directly predict the arrival of Jason and Medea, but it obviously has some prognostic function, for when Jason and Medea enter her palace, they are polluted with the guilt of the kin murder of Absyrtus, and in need of ritual cleansing (A.R. 4.691–699).[36] We might be reminded, then, not just of the dream of Medea in *Argonautica* 3, but also of Circe's nightmares in *Argonautica* 4, also prompted by Medea's kin-slaying.[37]

This radical re-structuring of the erotic relationship of Apollonius' *Argonautica* finds its *telos* in the wedding at Peuce. When Medea steps forth *oblita malorum* (V. Fl. 8.238) it is surely these evils—the evils predicted in her own tragic *Orakeltraum*—that she has forgotten, her woe at the outset (*adfixam maestis Aeetida curis*, 233) recalling her introduction as care-free girl (*nullaeque in uirgine curae*, 5.334). But this background also colours our interpretation of the troubling simile accompanying Medea at her wedding. The rational correspondence here is in the emotion of forgetfulness experienced in both simile (the participants in Cybele's cult) and narrative (Medea). But this simile reaches irrationally beyond to suggest a correspondence too between Cybele and Medea herself, both blood-drenched, both in need of lustration (8.239–242, above). It resonates as the culmination of Medea's story by recalling its very beginning (a trip to wash away the horrifying *monstra* of dreams, cause of the first meeting with Jason): via window reference, echoing Circe's actions to cleanse herself in response to the dreams she had had of Medea's (future) murder; and via allusion, the *telos* of her own career as child-murderer.[38]

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36 Cf. Kessels (1982) 161–163; Giangrande (2000) 114–117.

37 Cf. Wetzel (1957) 58 on Circe as model.

38 On the Cybele ritual see Lazzarini (2012) ad loc.

From Tragedy to Epic

Valerius includes an ominous coda to his 'tragic' prologue, a simile that cements the tragic status of Medea:

> his turbata minis fluuios ripamque petebat
> Phasidis aequali Scythidum comitante caterua.
> florea per uerni qualis iuga duxit Hymetti
> aut Sicula sub rupe choros, hinc gressibus haerens
> Pallados, hinc carae Proserpina iuncta Dianae,
> altior ac nulla comitum certante, priusquam
> palluit et uiso pulsus decor omnis Auerno,
> talis et in uittis geminae cum lumine taedae
> Colchis erat nondum miseros exosa parentes.
>
> V. Fl. 5.341–349

> In turmoil at these threats she sought water and Phasis' banks, accompanied by a crowd of Scythian age-mates. Just as Proserpina led her troop of dancers over the flowery ridges of spring-time Hymettus or beneath the Sicilian crag, joined close to Pallas on this side, to dear Diana on that, a tall girl, with none of her companions matching her—before she grew wan, all beauty dispelled at the sight of Avernus—so was the Colchian girl, in her fillets and accompanied by the light of a twin torch, not yet detesting her poor parents.

While this simile reworks very closely famous precedents which compare their respective heroines to Artemis/Diana (*Odyssey*'s Nausicaa and Virgil's Dido especially), there is a startlingly pointed substitution in the point of divine comparison here: Medea is instead a doomed Proserpina carrying the twin torches of Hecate, symbols of death.[39] The simile is strikingly negative: this Medea, whose role as priestess of Hecate, leader of virgin dancers, had already been mentioned (*praeterea infernae quae nunc sacrata Dianae / fert castos Medea choros*, V. Fl. 5.238–239), has her close connections to the Underworld reinforced by means of this simile, in which the positive and negative are never far

39 Valerian-Virgilian allusion occurs with *caterua* (V. Fl. 5.342; *A.* 1.497), *per … iuga* (V. Fl. 5.343; *A.* 1.498), *choros* (V. Fl. 5.344; *A.* 1.499), *hinc … hinc* (V. Fl. 5.344–345; *A.* 1.500), *talis erat Dido* (*A.* 1.503); *Colchis erat* (V. Fl. 5.349); cf. Gärtner (1994) 139–144. Medea is figured as Artemis in Apollonius (A.R. 3.876–886): cf. Gärtner (1994) 139; Nelis (2001) 82–86.

apart (*florea per **uerni** iuga … Hymetti: uiso pulsus decor omnis* **(*A*)*uerno***, 343, 347). But this simile once again anticipates her marriage, which will swap the virgin-fillets and sacral torches of Hecate for the crown and marriage torches of Venus. Valerius' aggressive strategy of proleptic allusion to Apollonius' narrative results in the framing of a Medea as *coniunx* before she has even met Jason.

There is of course another compelling model for the simile in which Medea is framed as Proserpina: Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 5, which recasts Medea's fate as that suffered by that *uirgo*, seized by Pluto at the instigation of an 'imperialist' Venus. The Ovidian Proserpina clearly lurks beneath the surface of the Valerian simile, and plays a significant part in the constant pressure to create a doomed atmosphere:

> … quo dum Proserpina luco
> ludit et aut uiolas aut candida lilia carpit,
> dumque puellari studio calathosque sinumque
> implet et aequales certat superare legendo,
> paene simul uisa est dilectaque raptaque Diti;
> usque adeo est properatus amor.
>
> Ov. *Met.* 5.391–396

> While Proserpina played in this grove, picking either violets or white lilies, and while she was filling her baskets and lap with girlish enthusiasm, and vied with her friends to beat them in the gathering-game, almost as soon was she was seen by Dis she was loved, she was stolen: such was the rapidity of his love.

This Ovidian resonance is not, however, activated until the moment Medea, now in the thrall of Juno (disguised as her sister Chalciope), is led to her doom:

> ducitur infelix ad moenia summa futuri
> nescia uirgo mali et falsae commissa sorori,
> **lilia per uernos lucent uelut alba colores**
> **praecipue**, quis uita breuis totusque parumper
> floret honor, fuscis et iam Notus imminet alis.
> hanc residens altis Hecate Perseia lucis
> flebat et has imo referebat pectore uoces:
> 'deseris heu nostrum nemus aequalesque cateruas,
> a misera, ut Graias haut sponte uageris ad urbes.
> non inuisa tamen neque te, mea cura, relinquam.

> **magna fugae monumenta dabis**, spernere nec usque
> mendaci captiua uiro, meque ille magistram
> sentiet e raptu famulae doluisse pudendo.'
>
> V. Fl. 6.490–502

> The unhappy girl, ignorant of the evil to come and trusting to her false sister, is led to the topmost walls: as white lilies gleam among the springtime flowers, for whom life is short and whose whole bloom flourishes briefly, and already the South wind threatens with his dusky wings. Persean Hecate, sitting in her lofty grove, wept for her and uttered these words from the depths of her heart: "You, alas, are abandoning my grove and your girlfriends, wretched one, in order to wander among Greek cities against your will: yet you are not hated and I will not abandon you, beloved one. You will give great monuments of your flight, nor though a captive, shall you be spurned by your perfidious husband: he will know that I am your teacher and that I grieved at the stolen virtue of my handmaiden."

The flower-imagery of 492–494, together with the words of Hecate, which respond to Medea's vision of departure from the *casti luci* of 5.335, bring to mind the oracular dream of the Proserpina-Medea of *Argonautica* 5; the key motifs of unwillingness and rejection foregrounded here (*captiua, spernere*, 6.500–501) anticipate her confrontation with Jason after their wedding (*si modo Peliacae non sum **captiua** carinae … inque tua me **sperne** domo*, 8.417–422); and the image of the girl, led by Juno and unaware of future evil (*futuri nescia … mali*, 6.490–491), obviously prefigures her marriage ceremony, where she is now *oblita malorum*. But more strikingly, the *magna fugae monumenta* promised by Hecate re-position Medea's future career not as tragedy but as *epic*. For when Hecate predicts Medea's future vengeance, she frames it in precisely the same terms as the epic *telos* of the quest: the Golden Fleece, which is the *monumentum* of another flight, that of Phrixus (*monumenta fugae Phrixea*, 8.119; cf. 5.229).

From Horace on, *monumentum* is a heavily freighted term for 'metareflexion', instantly reaching beyond the lyric genre to speak for poetic fame more generally.[40] The "reminders of savage grief" (*saeui monimenta doloris, A.* 12.945) in the *Aeneid* are not just the baldric of Pallas, the inspiration for Aeneas'

40 *exegi monumentum aere perennius* … ("I have built a monument longer-lasting than bronze …", Hor. *Carm.* 3.30.1). Of course here Horace is setting his own work in tension with the epicist Ennius. On 'metareflexion' here see e.g. Müller-Zettelman (2005) 125.

final act in Virgil's epic: they are also the epic itself, which bears witness for audiences in ages to come. Of course, the 'monumentality' reached for in the *Aeneid*—epic as the commemoration of death—is encoded from the *Iliad* on, which twins Achilles' *kleos* with his tomb;[41] and the conceit continues after Virgil in Ovid's own self-consciously realized monument not just to epic but also to himself in the *Metamorphoses*. Valerius continues the tradition, making the Fleece a monument to the heroic daring of Phrixus (*at uellera Martis in umbra / ipse sui Phrixus monumentum insigne pericli / liquerat ardenti quercum complexa metallo*, "But Phrixus himself had left the famed monument of his peril in the grove of Mars, the Fleece embracing the oak with its blazing gold", V. Fl. 5.228–230). But Hecate's claims for Medea's future *monumenta* also invite the reader to look more closely at the agency of Medea already within the epic itself.

Indeed, when Hecate frames Medea as parallel to the Fleece itself, she is responding not just to the Apollonian conflation of Fleece and girl but also to another major innovation in the Flavian *Argonautica*: the creation of a fully fledged war-narrative. However, this is battle-narrative with a difference: the *Schlachtenpanorama* cedes when Juno realizes that war—the κλέα φωτῶν—will not help Jason's quest, and decides that she must turn to Medea (6.439–440).[42] But it is just as important that Valerius writes the subjugation of Medea to *amor* from the beginning as a complementary battle-narrative with Iliadic roots, framing the relationship of Jason and Medea against the divine combination of Mars and Venus, as *itself* a miniaturised conflict within the larger-scale war of *Argonautica* 6. For when Juno decides that Medea must help Jason, she is figured as a worthy ally in pointedly military terms: *ergo opibus magicis et uirginitate tremendam / Iuno duci sociam coniungere quaerit Achiuo* ("Juno therefore sought to join an ally to the Greek commander awe-inspiring in her magical powers and her virginity", 449–450). The goddess' desire that Medea should be joined to Jason as his *coniunx* of course alludes to the similar plan of *Juno pronuba* at Carthage;[43] but that she should be joined as an ally, *sociam*

41 Cf. Hardie (2002) 178–179; Lovatt (2013) 347–374 traces the theme from the *Iliad* to Lucan. Papaioannou (2007) 254–287.

42 Cf. Feeney (1991) 326: "[t]he hypertrophy of epic apparatus in the book of warfare (indeed, the hypertrophy of epic apparatus from the beginning of the poem) begins to look like an effect of polarization, a desperate reaction against the collapse that will come when Medea takes over." See also Fucecchi (1997), esp. 13–16; Zissos (2004).

43 This strategy derives from the debate Hera has with Pallas in Apollonius' *Argonautica* (V. Fl. 5.280–295; A.R. 3.7–35), in turn traced from the plotting of the allied goddesses in the *Iliad*. Cf. Hunter (1989) 97 *ad* A.R. 3.6–35; and below.

coniungere, also hints at the power of such an alliance as if it were a joining of military force.[44]

The effects of such alliance become clear when Medea, pre-empting Helen, gazes at Jason from the walls of the city, achieving a level of involvement with the action on the battle-field out of all proportion with her Iliadic model. Once Medea has set eyes on Jason, a seam of allusion evokes an ever-growing sympathetic union of the two, fusing the erotic vocabulary of her slide into love with the military terminology of the battle-narrative proper.[45] And as Medea sees Jason undergo the risks of battle, she becomes a phantom-fighter herself, feeling the blows of rocks and spears as the hero does (V. Fl. 6.681–685), and even anticipating the fights to come (*ante uidens*, 582). Indeed, when Jason meets Medea's gaze in Valerius, we are presented with a contest between heroes as Medea begins to 'hunt' Jason down with her besotted gaze: *at regina uirum … / persequitur lustrans oculisque ardentibus haeret* ("But the princess pursues the man, tracking him down and clinging to him with blazing eyes", V. Fl. 6.658–659; cf. Aeneas' single-minded pursuit of Turnus, *A.* 12.647–648; cf. V. Fl. 6.576).

Valerius' choice to write attraction as combat-narrative is pointed. No matter how impressive Jason is on the battle-field, *Argonautica* 6 suggests, the real *gloria* rests with Medea. No wonder this book of the epic is framed by love of war (*subiti Mauortis amor*, V. Fl. 6.694) and the *fama* of Medea (*sollicitat nec Martis amor, sed fama Cytaeae / uirginis*, 156–157), or that the partnership is cemented when Medea finally takes over from Jason on the field of combat:

> … tum uero, amens discrimine tanto,
> quam modo Tartareo galeam Medea ueneno
> in medios torsit; conuersae protinus hastae.
> qualis ubi attonitos maestae Phrygas annua Matris
> ira uel exectos lacerat Bellona Comanos,
> haud secus accensas subito Medea cohortes
> implicat et miseros agit in sua proelia fratres.
>
> V. Fl. 7.631–638

44 *coniungo*; *OLD* s.v. 1b "to unite sexually", s.v. 3 "(mil.) To join (parties of men) into a single force, unite (forces)". Cf. Jason's alliance with Aeetes (V. Fl. 6.483–484) and the (doomed) alliance with Cyzicus (3.30, 268).

45 Fucecchi (1997) 176; see Lovatt (2006) 67–78 for more on Medea's *teichoscopia*.

> Then mad with fear at such danger he threw into the midst of the sown men his helmet—the helmet which Medea had previously drugged with the poison of Hell: instantly the spears reversed their direction. Just as when each year the anger of the Mother wounds the crazed Phrygians, or as Bellona wounds the eunuch Comani, not otherwise Medea suddenly entangles the inflamed cohorts and drives the poor brothers into civil war.

Jason throws the drugged helmet, but it is Medea, pointedly compared to the Magna Mater and Bellona, who engages the sown-men, and the metaphor for emasculation surely extends to the epic hero himself.

Once again, this symbolic act of *bellum ciuile* that will pave the way for the inward-turning intrafamilial violence of their own future is picked up in the ill-starred wedding, reinforcing the comparison of Medea as Cybele, the Magna Mater (8.225ff.). Valerius' narrative—and the wedding itself—elides the distinction between the *uirgo*'s besotted love—the very thing in the Virgilian tradition which steers the epic *off*-course—and the deeds worthy of *fama* which make up the stuff of epos. Perhaps this should not be a surprise, given the characters in charge of the epic at this point. Medea's infatuation has been engineered by Juno and Venus, in a plan which has exploited not just Apollonius (Hera's supplication of Aphrodite, A.R. 3.36–110), but also Homer: the Flavian Juno's plan rests on a visit to Venus to obtain the *cingulum*, just as Hera does in *Iliad* 14. Juno's visit to Venus also recalls a deeper backdrop to the divine conflicts in the *Argonautica* itself, for Venus has form already as a warmonger in this *Argonautica*: at Lemnos the pointedly named *Mauortia coniunx* (2.208) had been catalyst for civil war between husbands and wives, in revenge against the islanders who had neglected her worship through their favour for Venus' cuckolded husband, Vulcan.[46] But more importantly Valerius locates the *origin* of the conflict in the rebellion of the gods and Jupiter's punishment of Juno:

> tempore quo primum fremitus insurgere opertos
> caelicolum et regni sensit nouitate tumentes
> Iuppiter et aetheriae nec stare silentia pacis,
> Iunonem uolucri primam suspendit Olympo
> horrendum chaos ostendens poenasque barathri.
>
> V. Fl. 2.82–86

46 Cf. Fucecchi (1997) 134: on Lemnos as *bellum ciuile* fought along the gendered fault-line see further McGuire (1997) 107.

> When Jupiter first realized that hidden grumblings of the gods were surging up and that they were becoming rebellious because his power was new, and he recognized that the tranquility of heaven's peace would not last, he suspended Juno first from swift Olympus, displaying to her frightful chaos and the punishment of the abyss.

Valerius suggests here in a wholly new aetiology the reason for Vulcan's fall to Lemnos: his attempt to help a rebellious mother wholly at odds with her husband.[47] In *Argonautica* 6 Valerius returns to this marital discord, as Juno offers Venus the deceptive story that she requires Venus' girdle (*cingulum*) to smoothe things over with Jupiter (462–465), since she has offended him by detaching Hercules from the main body of the Argonautic expedition. This moment recalls not just the story of Hera's own punishment in the *Iliad* for her treatment of Herakles, but also reprises Hera's great moment of disobedience at *Iliad* 14, when she obtains the girdle (*kestos*) of Aphrodite in order to further the cause of the Greeks. Moreover, Valerius complements this with another story of divine marital discord: in *Argonautica* 6 Venus seizes the chance to engineer the destruction of the "hated" Colchian race, in retaliation, it is hinted, for the Sun's role in revealing her adulterous relationship with Mars (467–468). When, in their wedding at Peuce, Jason is compared to Mars heading from battle to an assignation with Venus (*qualis sanguineo uictor Gradiuus ab Hebro / Idalium furto subit aut dilecta Cythera*, 8.228–229), while Medea 'becomes' Venus as she takes on the accoutrements of the goddess (234–236), the union of Jason and Medea does not just echo how discordant *coniugium* in the divine sphere is: it also makes that discord *responsible* for epic.

When the Flavian Juno has successfully ejected Hercules from the *Argonautica*, and an angry Jupiter demands that the narrative now depend on Furies, Venus, and the wicked *uirgo* (4.13–14), most readers understand that the epic has been re-oriented: Jupiter-sanctioned martial *epos* will be replaced by the tragedy that will eventually be the result of the narratological control of Juno and Venus.[48] But Valerius' new 'origin' story for epic, which owes so much to a past literary tradition, is genuinely revisionary, for it does not sideline the transgressive female, but puts her centre-stage in the business not just of epic but also of empire. Jupiter may wash his hands of this epic after Hercules is lost to the quest, but if in the longer term a sequence in the order of

47 In the *Iliad*: cf. Poortvliet (1991) 75–77.
48 Cf. Feeney (1991) 324–327.

empires is what he desires, then it is precisely Juno and Medea who make this happen. As Jason himself points out,

> ‘o decus in nostros magnum uentura penates
> solaque tantarum uirgo haud indigna uiarum
> causa reperta mihi, <iam>iam non ulla requiro
> uellera teque meae satis est uexisse carinae.’
>
> V. Fl. 8.37–40

> “Destined to bring great honour to my family gods, you alone, *uirgo*, are the cause I have found for such a great voyage: now I do not seek any Fleece, for it is enough for my ship to have borne you.”

Of course Jason’s words here are archetypally manipulative. But in his appeal to Medea’s *decus*, and his claim that Medea herself now is his *causa uiarum*, Jason’s words point out just how differently this epic conceptualizes the role of the female. Medea’s flight *is* the stuff of epic, stimulating a shift in geo-politics that will eventually culminate with Rome. And if Medea is now *causa uiarum*, Aeetes the Colchian tyrant knows who to blame now: Jason’s *amor*, and Phrixus, *prima malorum / causa*:

> ‘orbe satos alio, sua litora regnaque habentes,
> quis furor has mediis tot fluctibus egit in oras
> quisue mei uos tantus amor? tu prima malorum
> causa mihi, tu, Phrixe gener! …’
>
> V. Fl. 7.35–38

> “Men of another world, who have your own shores and kingdoms, what furor had driven you to these lands over so much water? What great *amor* is it that you have for me? *You* are the first cause of my troubles, Phrixus, you, my son-in-law! …”

Working out from a specific Apollonian model that collapses both Medea and the Fleece into one *telos* for the epic, together with a tradition in Roman *epos* which casts the female as “cause” of conflict, Valerius re-writes an origin story for the role of *coniugium* at Colchis which valorizes the role of the transgressive female. It is Medea’s deeds which constitute *labor* (5.453), not Jason’s, her flight rather than his quest memorialized in song. And while Jupiter may prophesy a world-plan—after the Argonauts have got under way—it is Juno’s narrative that will eventually bring about the rise of Rome, by setting in motion the

change in empires Medea's conflict-ridden marriage will inspire. Re-purposing Virgil's flirtation with and avoidance of *coniugium*—a "marriage" to Dido that is a dead end for the narrative but is of crucial importance for the rise of Rome itself via its conflict with Carthage—the 'Roman' Medea who confronts Jason at the end of the *Argonautica*, fighting for her rights as a Roman wife, is a truly appropriate symbol for a tradition of *epos* which, Valerius reveals, is not predicated on the excision of the troublesome female but rather on the constant discord at both the human and divine level crucial to the evolution of power from one set of hands to another.

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A Perfect Murder: The Hypsipyle Epyllion

Peter Heslin

> … to conceal this letter, the Minister had resorted to
> the comprehensive and sagacious expedient
> of not attempting to conceal it at all.
>
> E.A. POE, "The Purloined Letter"

∵

Over the course of the fifth book of Statius' *Thebaid*, Hypsipyle inhabits a remarkable variety of female roles.[1] When we meet her in Nemea, she is a wet-nurse and a slave; then she tells the story of her past on Lemnos, first as a queen and daughter, later as Jason's spurned mistress; back in Nemea, she becomes mourner of the dead; finally, at the end of the book, she is redeemed from slavery and is transformed into a mother once again. Hypsipyle does not experience these transformations passively; as interlocutor and narrator she constructs and re-constructs her own self-fashioning. At the emotional climax of the book, King Lycurgus of Nemea goes so far as to accuse her of being a habitual creator of utter fictions (*fabula, mendacia*, 5.658–659) with respect to her own past.[2] In this article, I focus on the way Hypsipyle's self-conscious narrative interventions intersect with the expectations of literary genre, as I believe that this is an important means by which she takes control of her own destiny.

At the start of *Thebaid* 5, Hypsipyle is powerless and childless, in servitude to Lycurgus and his wife Eurydice, whose child Opheltes she nurses and cares for. At the end of the book, Hypsipyle is no longer powerless or childless; it is Lycurgus and Eurydice who are both childless and powerless (to punish

1 In 2010, a preliminary version of this paper was presented at a workshop in Nottingham organized by Helen Lovatt; a much revised version was presented at the conference in St Andrews from which this volume has developed. After I had submitted a draft of this article, I received a copy of Soerink's excellent 2014 PhD thesis. As Soerink responds to some of the ideas I had presented in Nottingham, I have made some revisions in order to take his views into account.

2 The text of the *Thebaid* used is Hill (1983); the translations are adapted from Shackleton Bailey (2003).

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her). At the start of the book, the Argives do not know who Hypsipyle is (*o quaecumque es*, 20). At the end, they know a great deal about her, but they do not know (or much care) who King Lycurgus is (*quisquis es*, 664). The symmetry created by this utter reversal of roles between Hypsipyle and the king and queen of Nemea marks out Book 5 as a self-contained narrative unit within the *Thebaid* as a whole. Furthermore, this narrative unit belongs to a particular genre, the epyllion, whose relevance has not been fully appreciated. The story of Hypsipyle is not "an epic within an epic", as Vessey called it, but an epyllion within an epic.[3]

This is not to deny the importance of epic and tragic models in *Thebaid* 5, which have been the main focus of scholarly attention. But I think the structure of the book and its relationship to the wider narrative can be elucidated in some important ways by comparing a different set of texts. I will start from McNelis' demonstration that Statius uses "Callimachean Nemea" to provide a "counterpoint" to the martial epic of the rest of the *Thebaid*.[4] But I will argue for a more specific dependence upon the plot of one particular Callimachean text, the *Hecale*, and the Latin literary tradition it helped to spawn. Once we read *Thebaid* 5 as an epyllion, we can properly appreciate the self-aware way Hypsipyle takes charge of her own destiny.

The Hypsipyle Epyllion

It might seem controversial to consider one book of the *Thebaid* as a self-contained unit, carefully constructed with reference to the generic tradition of which the *Hecale* was the founding text. The very validity of the category of "epyllion" has been the subject of skepticism.[5] While it is true that this is not an ancient term, it is nevertheless a convenient label for a distinct ancient tradition; or perhaps, for several related traditions. The absence of an ancient label or even of a stable and consistent set of characteristics is not a real issue: poets tended to express generic affiliations in terms of concrete poetic models rather than of generic abstractions and absolute philological definitions. For my purposes, I take "epyllion" to be a dynamically evolving Latin tradition that took Callimachus' *Hecale* as its first landmark. As Hollis put it, "Roman poets who

3 Vessey (1970) 44.

4 McNelis (2007) 76–96; see also Parkes (2012) xxii–xxiii, and, for a revisionist view, Soerink (2014b) 47–56.

5 See Allen (1940), updated by Trimble (2012).

composed works such as Catullus 64 or the pseudo-Virgilian *Ciris*—not to mention lost poems like Cinna's *Zmyrna* or Calvus' *Io*—must surely have believed that they were using a recognizable form inherited from the Greeks".[6] That formulation usefully frames the genre in terms of the relationships between specific poems rather than as a laundry-list of characteristics, but it is too static and passive. Conte has taught us that ancient literary genres are not trans-historical, "simple, immobile abstractions", but matrices of relationships between specific models that change when new texts are added.[7] The failure to see that the set of expectations we call the genre of "epyllion" was evolving over time, taking a new direction at Rome, is what lies behind the persistence of the skeptical view.[8]

With respect to Statius' poetic project in *Thebaid* 5, the two most important epyllia to consider as intertexts are the *Hecale* and Catullus 64, which are the prime examples of the genre in Greek and Latin respectively. But, as always in the *Thebaid*, Virgil cannot be ignored, and the second half of the fourth book of Virgil's *Georgics* is also a significant model. More surprisingly, we may also detect the influence of the pseudo-Virgilian *Culex*, which Statius was willing to regard as authentic and written by Virgil, at least for the purposes of his own self-justifying rhetoric in the preface to the first book of *Siluae*, where, having recently completed the *Thebaid*, he deploys it as an example of a great poet turning his hand to a lesser genre. The example of Virgil's Aristaeus/Orpheus epyllion should serve to mitigate the objection that it makes no sense to extract one book of the *Thebaid* to consider it alongside short autonomous texts. The *Georgics* provides an explicit model for integrating a single epyllion into a larger work of a very different character, and there could be no better authority for Statius' practice in the *Thebaid* than Virgil.[9]

The salient features of the particular branch of the epyllion tradition within which Statius is working in *Thebaid* 5 are: a shorter, complex mythological narrative in which sub-heroic, usually female and romantic or domestic, experience is juxtaposed with the heroic; an extended digression that offers a pointed contast to the main narrative; and swift reversals of fortune in both frame and digression which happen in inverted counterpoint. There are a number of specific aspects of the plot of *Thebaid* 5 which have suggestive links with epyllia. As in the *Hecale*, Statius gives us a hero/heroes on their way to a heroic exploit,

6 Hollis (1990) 25, quoted skeptically by Trimble (2012) 65.

7 See Conte (1994) 105–128 (quote, p. 127).

8 Trimble (2012) offers a much more nuanced take on that position than Allen (1940), but ultimately shares the same static, essentializing view of literary genre.

9 This is a separate matter from the generic status of works like Ovid's *Metamorphoses* that might be considered as tapestries of epyllia.

who encounter an aged nurse who offers them hospitality. As in Catullus 64, there is an inset story about a female figure who goes from happiness to the depths of despair until she is rescued by Bacchus. As in *Georgics* 4, there is an inset story about a woman named Eurydice who suffers great loss due to the thoughtlessness of another person who inadvertently causes a death due to a snake. As in the *Culex*, there is a heroic battle with a snake who is the guardian of a stream, and it ends with the death of a tiny creature who is given a memorial out of all proportion to his size.

Given that all of these features of the myth were present in the literary tradition about Hypsipyle that Statius inherited, is their combination significant? In a thoughtful response to a preliminary articulation of my argument, Soerink finds the parallels I adduced with the *Hecale* "attractive", but is not convinced by the others.[10] He has two objections, one of which is potentially serious. We need not be worried by the fact that Statius' allusions to the epyllion tradition are never pure, but contain mixtures from other genres. So the allusion to a famous line from Catullus 64 discussed below is not contradicted by the presence of allusions to the *Aeneid* in that same passage.[11] The technique of multiple reference is standard for the tradition in which Statius is writing. Soerink's other objection requires a more robust response. He claims that the name of Eurydice has nothing to do with epyllion in this context, because "the name is simply dictated by tradition". This is the disease of the commentator: reducing a poet to a mechanical reproducer of themes found elsewhere. It is true that Eurydice is the name for Opheltes' mother found in Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, but it is also true, as Soerink himself has shown, that Statius departs from that model when it suits him. The name Eurydice inevitably had very different associations for Statius' Roman readers than it did for Euripides. If Statius found that resonance unwelcome, the tradition provided alternative names: Creusa, or if a name entirely without Virgilian connections was needed, Amphithea.[12] Or he could have suppressed the name entirely. None of the individual elements of Statius' story are invented; that would be breaking the rules of the game. It is in the selection and arrangement of these elements that Statius' profound originality lies. The drought, the snake, the death and the memorial are all parts of the traditions around Nemea, but Statius rearranges them in the light of epyllion. The identification of traditional elements is the first task of the commentator, but that is where interpretation begins, not ends. Statius was much more than a

10 Soerink (2014b) 54.

11 See below on Cat. 64.55 and 61.

12 Soerink (2014b) 16.

technically accomplished versifier of stories dictated by tradition. Rome rushed to hear Statius recite the *Thebaid* because something exciting was happening.

From the point of view of structure, the most important feature of the epyllion is the way one or more inset narratives, usually as ecphrasis or reported speech, contrast pointedly with the framing story. These inset narratives often contain reversals of fortune, or double reversals, which pointedly contrast with the reversals or double reversals of the frame. In the framing heroic narrative of the *Hecale*, Theseus is at first forlorn and without shelter, but he goes on to triumph against the bull of Marathon; then he is disappointed by the sudden death of Hecale. In the inset domestic narrative, the poor Hecale is suddenly honored by the surprise visit of her noble guest, who promises future benefits, but she dies before she can enjoy them. In the heroic frame of Catullus 64, Peleus is honored by the gods with a marriage to the immortal Thetis, but we know that shortly after the end of the poem she will abandon him. In the ecphrasis, Ariadne is abandoned by Theseus, but is rescued by Bacchus and is honored with a marriage to the immortal god. In the agricultural framing story of *Georgics* 4, Aristaeus loses his bees, but then gets them back again. In the romantic inset narrative, Orpheus loses Eurydice, gets her back and then loses her again. In the framing story of the *Thebaid*, the expedition of the Argives begins proudly but ends in despair, whereas in Book 5 Hypsipyle begins as a slave, is plunged into despair, but ends as a queen. Within the frame of Book 5, her autobiographical narrative occupies a further level of nesting in which fortunes are contrasted, for on Lemnos she begins as a queen and ends as a slave.

If we situate *Thebaid* 5 in the context of the epyllion tradition, this will help to explain how Statius deploys a number of important features which derive from the high epic tradition. Many scholars have emphasized Hypsipyle's characterization as an epic poet in her own right.[13] They have shown that her account of the Lemnian massacre and its aftermath is heavily indebted to Aeneas' tale of the fall of Troy in *Aeneid* 2.[14] Both internal narrators tell of saving their father and of their own escape from a destroyed city which has been abandoned by the gods. This is a crucially important feature of *Thebaid* 5, and I agree that Hypsipyle's characterization as a self-conscious poet and her emulation of Aeneas are key aspects of her self-presentation. But the epic tradition exemplified by Books 9–12 of the *Odyssey* and Books 2–3 of the *Aeneid*, in which the hero relates his wanderings, cannot on its own explain all of *Thebaid* 5. Hypsipyle does indeed want to present herself as a wandering heroine, but,

13 See Nugent (1996) and Gibson (2004) 156–171.

14 See Frings (1996) and Ganiban (2007) 71–95.

unlike Odysseus and Aeneas, she is not the heroine of the larger epic. In other words, in the *Thebaid* her retrospective story is embedded as an inset within the Hypsipyle-drama of Book 5, and that drama is inserted as a separate and distinct story within the larger plot of the Seven against Thebes. This is where the epyllion tradition with its separate and contrasting embedded narratives can help.

Another way the epyllion can help to explain some features of the content of *Thebaid* 5 is in terms of the choices Statius made in following or departing from the particulars of the plot of Euripides' *Hypsipyle*, of which substantial fragments survive.[15] Soerink has recently revisited the question of the relationship between that play and the *Thebaid*, convincingly demonstrating its fundamental importance for understanding Statius' narrative in Books 4 to 6. At the end of his discussion, Soerink identifies four particular points at which our poet appears to depart from Euripides in order to revert to the archaic form of the plot.[16] For three of these, he can provide good reasons for the change. In two cases, Statius can be seen to throw off the restrictions of the stage. Euripides must have Opheltes die off-stage, so Hypsipyle takes the infant with her to the stream, whereas Statius is able to show her leaving him behind. Likewise, Euripides had practical constraints on the number of actors and characters, so he makes Amphiaraus take a leading role, whereas Statius can share the dramatic duties more evenly among the Seven.[17] A more interesting change is the way Statius has Lycurgus act as the mouthpiece of anger against Hypsipyle, instead of his wife Eurydice, as in the play. Soerink makes some interesting points about this modification as a critique of Euripides.[18] I would add that this change of adversary is also important for highlighting the extent of Hypsipyle's self-transformation from slave to queen: she defeats not a fellow woman, but a fellow royal sovereign.

The remaining one of these apparently archaizing changes to Euripides' plot is the most sweeping in its consequences, but for this choice Soerink is not able to provide an equally compelling motivation.[19] In the *Hypsipyle*, Amphiaraus knocks on the door of Lycurgus' house because he is looking for water, presumably no more than a jug-full, to perform a sacrifice. In the

15 See, most recently, Collard and Cropp (2009) vol. 2, 250–321.
16 Soerink (2014a) 186–191 (= Soerink (2014b) 23–37).
17 Soerink (2014a) 186–188.
18 Soerink (2014a) 188–191, with discussion of earlier scholarship. Statius sets up the expectation that Eurydice will confront Hypsipyle, as in Euripides: *contra subit obuia mater* (5.651), only for Lycurgus to take over, at least for the duration of this book.
19 Soerink (2014a) 186.

Thebaid, of course, the need for water is greater and more pressing. Statius has Bacchus create a drought of cosmic proportions, and, by leading them to water, Hypsipyle saves the Argive army from destruction. It is probable, but not certain, that the drought was already part of the pre-Euripidean epic tradition.[20] Statius must have had a good reason to reject the Euripidean version, as he did in the other places he diverged from his primary model. I believe that he chose to revert to the drought-version in order to set up the epyllion of Book 5.

By creating a parched landscape and an army in serious need, Statius sets up the situation as a witty inversion of the dramatic pretext for the encounter between Theseus and Hecale. In Callimachus' poem, the hero is caught in a violent thunderstorm while traveling from Athens to Marathon and gets soaked.[21] He seeks refuge with Hecale, who makes a fire, offers him a tattered blanket and enables him to dry off. Statius has arranged the plot of his epic so that a clever inversion of this scene plays out in Nemea. The Argive army is oppressed not by an excess of water but by an insufficiency. The landscape is parched rather than soaked, but they likewise find refuge with an old woman who was once prosperous but who has fallen on hard times. She revives the heroes not by drying them off, but by showing them a stream into which they promptly plunge en masse (4.816–830). In both poems, the unlikely encounter between the heroic sphere and the humble and domestic world, and the inversion of roles whereby an old woman becomes the unlikely savior of a hero, is precipitated by the weather.

Callimachean Nemea

The expectation that Hypsipyle will recapitulate the role of Hecale at Nemea has been carefully prepared. During the catalogue of Argive army in Book 4,

20 See Soerink (2014a) 186 and Parkes (2012) xxix and 282. The first line of the Cyclic *Thebaid* is preserved and it refers to "thirsty Argos" (Ἄργος … πολυδίψιον). If that does refer to a drought at Nemea, which is by no means certain, it suggests that it was an important theme of that epic. The Pindaric scholia preserve some references to Hypsipyle relieving the thirst of the Argive army at Nemea (the start of the second and fourth hypothesis to the *Nemean Odes*: οἱ ἑπτὰ ἐπὶ Θήβας παραβαλόντες τῇ Νεμέᾳ διψήσαντες συνέτυχον Ὑψιπύλῃ …); the texts are give by Bond (1963) 148. The intersection of Hypsipyle with the story of the Argives at Nemea is usually held to be a Euripidean innovation; if so, these scholia cannot be reporting the Cyclic version. Perhaps they are looking to the *Thebaid* of Antimachus of Colophon; see Matthews (1996) 137.

21 Storm: F18 (Hollis) 8–16; dripping cloak: F28.

the participation of Nemea is signaled with an extended reminiscence of the fact that this was where Hercules, on his way to fight the Nemean lion, found hospitality in the humble hut of Molorchus (4.159–164).[22] The most famous literary treatment of this episode in antiquity was in the *Victoria Berenices* at the start of the third book of Callimachus' *Aetia*, which narrated the initial foundation myth for the Nemean games.[23] That text also adumbrated the second, re-foundation of the games in memory of Opheltes/Archemorus, the episode which is narrated at length in Book 6 of the *Thebaid*. The Molorchus episode in the *Aetia* and the *Hecale* were duplicate treatments by Callimachus of the theme of a lowly peasant giving hospitality to a great hero on his way to confront a monster.[24] As readers, we can treat the Molorchus story as the model for the pattern Hecale follows, since it comes first in mythological time, even though it is not certain which text Callimachus wrote first.

Just before the Argive army arrives in Nemea, Statius has prepared the reader to view it as a place of Callimachean pedigree, where a character of lowly station gives hospitality to a great hero. That hospitality gave rise to an initial founding of the Nemean games. In other words, Statius found in Callimachus two distinct ideas of repetition connected with Nemea. First is the duplication by Hecale of Molorchus' hospitality scene. Second is the duplication of foundation myths for the Nemean games, first by Hercules and then by the Seven. Statius neatly ties these repetitions together by creating a third repetition of the hospitality scene in which Hypsipyle recapitulates the role of Hecale, but does so in the precise location where Molorchus had provided the original model of that kind of encounter. What makes this third, Statian elaboration of the Callimachean theme sublimely clever rather than merely slavish and derivative automatism is that it thereby ties together the first founding of the Nemean games with the second: both are now, thanks to Statius, the product of Callimachus' hospitality *topos*. There is one crucial difference, however, between these two treatments of the theme: all ends well for both Hercules and Molorchus, whereas Hecale dies on the occasion of Theseus'

22 See McNelis (2007) 84 and 92 on Molorchus and also p. 86 on the influence of the *Hecale* on the topography of Statius' catalogue more generally. It is likely that Book 5 of the *Thebaid* of Antimachus contained a major hospitality scene as well, a banquet at the palace of Adrastus; see F 18–28 Matthews.

23 According to the reconstruction of Parsons (1977). Alternatively, it has been suggested that the foundation of the games may merely have been foretold in the *Victoria Berenices*; see Soerink (2014b) 12–14.

24 See Hollis (1990) 344–345 and Ambühl (2004).

victory.[25] As we will see, Hypsipyle knows this and understands the consequences.

Now that we can identify the Callimachean pedigree of the drought-episode which dominates Books 4–6 of the *Thebaid*, we are almost ready to look in detail at the way Book 5 engages with the *Hecale* and its Latin literary progeny. But first, one important aspect of Callimachus' text needs to be clarified. Since Hypsipyle is transformed over the course of that book from a nurse into a mother, it is clearly important to know which of these female family roles was embodied by Callimachus' heroine. Unfortunately, the surviving fragments are equivocal on this point. She clearly was responsible for the upbringing of two boys who died prematurely. It seems very likely that they were killed by the brigand Cercyon, whom she complains about and whom we know Theseus has already killed (F49 Hollis). This would provide a neat parallel with Molorchus, who has suffered a similar loss to the Nemean lion whom his guest Hercules goes on to destroy.[26] Statius continues the pattern by having the Argives kill the snake who has killed their hostess' foster-child, Opheltes.

Was Hecale a nurse or a mother? It used to be assumed on the basis of a statement in Ovid's *Remedia Amoris* that she never married. The discovery of papyrus fragments (F47–49 Hollis) in which she recalls fondly how she raised two boys has inclined recent scholarship to assume that she was married and had a family. But that runs against the grain of the Ovidian passage; it is anachronistic sentimentalism to infer that Hecale must have been the mother of the boys whom she raised and loved. Indeed Statius' depiction of the relationship of Hypsipyle and Eurydice to Opheltes is a demonstration of the routine fact that in the ancient world a nurse would be closer to an infant than his mother in a wealthy household. We can reconcile the evidence of Ovid and of the papyrus by positing that Hecale never married but was nurse to the boys she raised. Incidentally, Theseus addresses Hecale as μαῖα (F40 and 80 Hollis), which is how Odysseus addresses his aged nurse, Eurycleia.[27]

In order to argue that Hecale was a mother, one has to put a very odd interpretation upon the passage in the *Remedia Amoris* where Hecale is used,

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25 On the contrast between the *Hecale* as tragic and the *Victoria Berenices* as comedy, see Ambühl (2004) 29–32. Parkes (2012) *ad* 4.161–164 notes that the reference to Molorchus stands in contrast to the other examples of hospitality in the book with less happy outcomes.

26 Thus Ambühl (2004) 29 n. 34. The lion has devastated the countryside, and the Statian scholia (*ad Theb*. 4.160) add that it had killed Molorchus' son.

27 On the links between Hecale and Aeneas' nurse, Caieta, see Skempis (2010) and McNelis (2003) 161.

along with the beggar Irus from the *Odyssey*, as an example of why poor people do not attract lovers:

> cur nemo est, Hecalen, nulla est, quae ceperit Iron?
> nempe quod alter egens, altera pauper erat.
> Ov. *Rem.* 747–748

> Why is there no man who picked Hecale? Why no woman who picked Irus? Because, in fact, the latter was a beggar and the former was a pauper.

Hollis comments:

> But perhaps *Rem.* 747–748 by no means proves that Hecale never married. Ovid merely says that nobody would have her *in her impoverished state*; it remains quite possible that in her earlier and more prosperous years she married and produced children.[28]

But that is not in fact what Ovid says; he makes an absolute statement: no man wanted Hecale. He then gives poverty as a reason for that fact, not as a limit on the scope of his previous general claim. Poverty is not the only reason the widowed Hecale might fail to attract lovers: in the scanty fragments she is repeatedly and emphatically called an old woman. She even walks with a stick (F66 Hollis). Did Ovid really mean that Hecale, after marrying, bearing two sons, raising them to adulthood, being widowed, and losing her children, would have been attractive to men if only she had some money? Any joke is possible with Ovid, but the merry widow is a character-type alien to Greek myth, where the lives of women do not, as a rule, have second acts. The disastrous consequences for those few that try to remarry, such as Jocasta and Dido, prove the rule. It is a much less forced interpretation of the currently available evidence to suppose that Hecale lost her fortune when young and entered into service as a wet-nurse. So, for the sake of argument, I will presume that in Callimachus' poem, Hecale was a nurse to her two boys but not their mother. This is a crucial point, for it means that she is a precise literary model for Hypsipyle as we encounter her at the start of Book 5. If, on the other hand, a new papyrus were found that proves that Hecale was a mother, then my arguments below could still stand, but would have to be modified to emphasize that Hypsipyle rejects the role of Hecale not because she wishes to present

28 Hollis (1990) 189, accepting the arguments of Barigazzi (1958) 456–457.

herself as a mother rather than a nurse, but because she still holds out hope that her two sons are not dead but alive.

Let us now look at how Book 5 starts:

> pulsa sitis fluuio, populataque gurgitis alueum
> agmina linquebant ripas amnemque minorem;
>
> Stat. *Theb*. 5.1–2

> Thirst quenched by the river, the army was leaving its ravaged bed and banks—a smaller stream.

This is a Callimachean metapoetic metaphor. The muddy, massive river was associated with bad poetry at the end of Callimachus' *Hymn to Apollo*, and here Statius plays on that theme. In the previous book, the Argive army, crazed with thirst, leaped into the river Langia, which normally ran clear (*modo lene uirens et gurgite puro / perspicuus*, 4.824–825); the soldiers churn it into a muddy mess (*iam crassus caenoque et puluere torrens*, 4.820). A number of scholars have noted the Callimachean resonance of this imagery; McNelis writes:[29]

> The contrast between the pure, gentle stream (…) and the turbulence created by the soldiers (…) coheres with the water imagery that is often employed by Callimachean poets.

Later, at the start of Book 5, this same river is, for a while, diminished in volume (*amnemque minorem*). This is an elegant metaphor for the temporary contraction of the *Thebaid*, for the duration of Book 5, from high, heroic epic to the Alexandrian scale of the Hypsipyle epyllion. Like the Langia, Statius' poem will recover its grander scale again in time.

This Callimachean programmatic statement is reinforced a few lines later, in a simile which compares the Argive army, as it resumes formation, to a noisy flock of cranes flying north for the summer from Alexandria to Thrace. At first this seems an epic simile, derived from Homer's description of the marshaling of the Trojan forces at the start of the third book of the *Iliad* (3.3–6), by way of a Virgilian adaptation in the *Aeneid* (10.264–266). But McNelis has noticed that Statius made an important change:[30]

29 McNelis (2007) 88. See also Parkes (2012) xxii–xxiii and *ad* 4.824–827, and Soerink (2014b) 59.

30 McNelis (2007) 89–90.

> But this simile differs from the Homeric and Virgilian models in two ways: first, Statius' predecessors use the animals to accentuate the commencement of battle; second, their cranes fly south to avoid the winter and rain. In particular, the Iliadic birds fly against the Pygmies, who conventionally dwell along the Nile. Statius' birds invert these models because they return for the summer and tolerate rain. In addition, Statius' birds reverse the Homeric course and fly away from Egypt to Thrace, the home of Mars. Significantly, their flight pattern follows the path taken by the cranes in Callimachus' *Aetia* prologue (1.1.13–14), where the birds, representing abhorrent poetry because of their ugly sounds, are banished from Egypt. In reversing the direction of the birds' flight, the *Thebaid* both limits the influence of these warlike birds to Thrace and proclaims the adoption of Callimachean sensibilities.

I would read this simile the same way, but with particular reference to the temporary narrowing of scope for the duration of Book 5 as a self-contained epyllion. For a time, the noisy birds of war have flown away from Alexandria and we can focus on a different kind of tale.

We have already had a glimpse of Hypsipyle and a taste of her story at the end of Book 4 when she guides the Argives to the river. The thirsting Adrastus first addresses her flatteringly as the goddess Diana (*diua potens nemorum*, 4.753). This puts us in mind of Odysseus' initial address to Nausicaa when he asks for her help (*Od.* 6.151). But Hypsipyle is quite evidently no maiden, as she is nursing a baby (*ad ubera Opheltes*, 4.748). Adrastus belatedly notices this fact, so he modifies his rhetoric accordingly, but in so doing he makes another mistake, referring again to Diana, but this time implying that the goddess may have brought her a husband and a child (4.756).[31] In her response, Hypsipyle is at pains to correct Adrastus' mistaken impression. She calls herself a bereaved nurse (*altricem … orbam*, 4.778) and makes it clear that the child she is holding belongs to someone else (*mandati … pignoris*, 4.778–779). She says that she does not know the fate of her own sons and drops some leading hints about her own royal background and noble father (*ingens pater*, 4.780) before leading them to the river. In other words, the question of whether Hypsipyle is a nurse or a mother is the very first point at issue when we meet her, and this is the matter upon which Book 5 will turn.

31 On the rhetorical fumbling of Adrastus here, see Parkes (2012) *ad* 4.753–760.

Host or Guest?

When the conversation is resumed in Book 5, Adrastus picks up on her earlier reference to a noble father (*dic quis et ille pater*, 5.25) and asks her to give an account of her background.[32] He says that from her face he can see that she is of high birth, despite her present circumstances. At this point, we are still comfortably within the paradigm of the *Hecale*, for there was a conversation between Theseus and Hecale in which they both described their backgrounds, and there is a fragment in which the hostess tells Theseus that she was not always poor (F41 Hollis). But in her first words, Hypsipyle evokes a very different model:

> … 'inmania uulnera, rector,
> integrare iubes …'
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 5.29–30

> "Deep are the wounds, O prince, thou biddest me revive …"

As has been widely recognized, this is an unmistakable allusion to the first words of Aeneas narrative of his own back-story in the palace of Dido:[33]

> infandum, regina, iubes renouare dolorem
>
> Verg. *A.* 2.3

> Unspeakable is the grief, O queen, you bid me revisit

These first words have a clear programmatic import: Hypsipyle's narrative of the destruction of Lemnos, a city abandoned by the gods, will be modeled upon Aeneas' account of the sack of Troy. But this does not mean that the *Hecale* disappears completely from sight. For Virgil's line very likely contains an allusion to the words which Hollis has argued were the opening of Hecale's speech to Theseus:[34]

> … τί δάκρυον εὗδον ἐγείρεις;
> οὐ γάρ μοι πενίη πατρώιος, οὐδ' ἀπὸ πάππων
> εἰμὶ λιπερνῆτις· βάλε μοι, βάλε τὸ τρίτον εἴη
>
> Call. *Hec.* F41 Hollis

32 Frings (1996) 150.
33 See Nugent (1996) 49–51 and Ganiban (2007) 73.
34 Hollis (1982) 472 with Hollis (1990) 179 and 320.

> Why awaken a sleeping sorrow? My poverty is not ancestral, my grandfathers did not make me poor: would to god, would to god I had one third …

Statius is therefore making a "window allusion" to both Virgil and to his source.[35]

Statius is doing more here than just making a cleverly simultaneous allusion to two different texts, for his window allusion also serves to highlight an important difference between them. The Callimachean *topos* of the humble peasant offering meagre but honest hospitality to a great hero derives ultimately from the Eumaeus episode in the *Odyssey*, whereas the Virgilian *topos* of the wandering hero who tells of his sufferings at extended length derives from the Phaeacian episode in the *Odyssey*.[36] Hecale is a very different role-model to Aeneas. One way, therefore, of thinking about Hypsipyle's speech is to view it as a calculated effort to redefine the literary tradition to which she belongs. It is obvious that her rhetoric is carefully designed to induce her audience to view her as someone of importance and substance, much more than a slave and a nurse. Her success in self-redefinition is evident in the way the Argives refer to her in royal and even heroic terms at the end of her speech, when she is under threat from Lycurgus: *ducem seruatricemque cohortis* (5.672), *inuentrix fluminis* (5.703). What I want to examine here is the way in which Hypsipyle's invocation of a heroic model for her actions reacts against the Callimachean narrative framework in which she finds herself.

Apart from the differences in sex, the change in genre from epyllion to epic and the gulf of social status between Hecale and Aeneas, another major difference between these two literary models is in the guest/host relationship. In Callimachus' text, Hecale is the hostess, even though she lives in a hut. Her guest, Theseus, had come from Troezen to his father's palace at Athens, whence he has immediately escaped to avoid Medea's plotting. He is now traveling to Marathon. He may not have travelled as far as Odysseus or Aeneas, but he is just as homeless as they; he is the wandering hero and Hecale is his hostess. In the *Aeneid*, by contrast, the speaker is not female but male and is not the hostess but the wandering hero. In other words, in order to transform herself from Hecale into Aeneas, Hypsipyle has to change from hostess to guest. In this,

35 On the phenomenon of "window reference", see Thomas (1986) 188–189.

36 An anonymous reader for the press points out that Odysseus tells to Eumaeus his lying Cretan tale, so this tradition also teaches us to be wary of duplicitous autobiographical narrative.

Statius sets up the encounter with the Argives in such a way as to leave up in the air the question of who is the host and who is the wanderer.

Euripides' *Hypsipyle* opens with a scene at the shrine where Lycurgus is priest, and it immediately foregrounds the theme of hospitality. Two strangers arrive and ask Hypsipyle for shelter. It will turn out in the end that these are her sons, but she does not know that yet. Upon learning that Lycurgus is not present, the men seem to suggest that they should go elsewhere to find lodging. The text is fragmentary at this point, but it seems that Hypsipyle urges them strongly to come in, perhaps to ask her mistress, Eurydice. Not long after, Adrastus comes to the temple looking for water for sacrifice, and Hypsipyle shows him the stream. In other words, she acts very much as hostess, either in her own right, or on behalf of her master and mistress. Statius makes a subtle change to the setting, removing her from the house and temple, palace and town. She meets the Argives in the woods (*inter siluas … errantes*, 4.746–747; *umbra*, 5.45). The effect of this change is to make it entirely unclear who is the host and who the guest. Both are wandering through an alien landscape. After Hypsipyle tells her tale of adventure, it is easy to view her as the true wanderer. She has come across the sea from Lemnos, whereas the Argives are from the city just down the road. Thus Statius provides a setting in which Hypsipyle's self-redefinition from Hecale to Aeneas and thus from hostess to wandering guest is plausible.

Hypsipyle understands the literary context from which she needs to escape. She describes herself as a hostess when answering Adrastus' query about her parentage:[37]

> o pater! illa ego nam, pudeat ne forte benignae
> hospitis, illa, duces, raptum quae sola parentem
> occului. quid longa malis exordia necto?
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 5.34–36

> Ah father! For I am she, captains, lest perchance you be ashamed of your kindly hostess, she who alone snatched her parent away and hid him.

When she calls herself a kind hostess (*benigna hospes*), she not only recalls the Hecale-tradition in general terms, but also anticipates the word, hostess (*hospes/hospita*), used by Evadne to describe Hecale in her appeal to The-

37 On Hypsipyle's relationship to her father see also Stocks in this volume.

seus on behalf of the Argive women.[38] Evadne appeals to his record as a scourge of the lawless, and brings to mind the tears shed by Hecale, the old woman who was his hostess: *nec fudit uanos anus hospita fletus* (12.582). It is worth noting that the Latin word used by Hypsipyle (*hospes*) is in fact ambiguous, as it can mean either "host" or "guest". The rest of Hypsipyle's narrative pushes strongly back against the Argives' identification of her as a hostess. This is made most clear in the final line of her long narrative, when she briefly notes her capture by brigands and enslavement. She says that they brought her to *your* shores: *uestras famulam transmittit in oras* (5.498). In other words, I am a stranger in this place, Nemea, the Peloponnese, the Greek mainland; this is *your* home, not mine. At the end of the speech, Hypsipyle is no longer the aged hostess; she stands as the guest, the wanderer, the heroine.

We can understand why it is that Hypsipyle wants to follow a narrative route different from the *Hecale*, as is clear when she herself alludes to that story. When she describes the landing of the Argo on Lemnos, she includes Theseus among the crew, which is not a standard part of the myth:

> hic et ab adserto nuper Marathone superbum
> Thesea
>
> Stat. *Theb*. 5.431–432

> Here we see Theseus proud of Marathon lately freed.

One reason for this specific reference to the bull of Marathon is to specify that Theseus' participation as an Argonaut happened relatively early in his career, as it would have to in order for him to appear alongside the older generation of heroes, especially Hercules.[39] But for the reader of Callimachus, the reference to Theseus just after (*nuper*) that exploit must bring to mind the scene when he returns to the humble house of Hecale to share the good news and finds her dead. At that point, he institutes the rites in her memory. In other words, Hyp-

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38 See also the end of Book 4, where the river Langia is invoked as *hospita* (4.849).

39 In fact, the inclusion of Theseus creates a chronological paradox. In the *Hecale*, the episode of the bull of Marathon happens when Medea is already in Athens; but the Argonauts have not even arrived in Colchis yet. Chronological paradoxes involving the young Theseus and the Argo are a feature of both epic and epyllion. Apollonius has Jason in Colchis tell Medea the story of Theseus' voyage to Crete, even though that should happen around the time Medea is in Athens. Catullus 64 likewise represents Theseus' voyage in the ecphrasis as chronologically prior to the voyage of the Argo in the frame narrative.

sipyle tells us that she knows how the *Hecale* ends. It is not a happy prospect for her. If the *Thebaid* should carry on according to the Callimachean model, this is what will happen: the Argives will sack Thebes, return to Nemea and find Hypsipyle dead, whereupon they will re-found the Nemean games (after the first founding in memory of Molorchus) in her memory. Fortunately for Hypsipyle, there are a number of reasons this is impossible. The most important is that the expedition of the Seven is doomed to failure. The silver lining for Hypsipyle is that, by the iron law of the epyllion, the inset narrative must tell a contrasting tale with respect to the frame narrative. The overdetermined and fore-ordained disaster of the Argive mission means that her story can, and must, have a happy ending.

Digression and Counter-point

Returning again to the start of Hypsipyle's narrative, we can see how she turns to Virgil in order to push back against the *Hecale* model, and not only in her efforts to evoke Aeneas in Carthage. In the lines quoted above, she asks *quid longa malis exordia necto?* This is a clear recollection of a passage in the *Georgics*:

> … non hic te carmine ficto
> atque per ambages et longa exorsa tenebo.
> Verg. *G.* 2.45–46

> I'll not detain you here with idle song, through digressions and lengthy preludes.

In both cases the protestation against drawn-out beginnings (*longa exorsa/exordia*) is patently insincere. Virgil has no intention of writing the straightforward agricultural handbook he has promised, and his poem is full of these digressions, most notably in the second half of the fourth book, which has many levels of nested digressions away from the ostensible didactic theme. Likewise, Hypsipyle's intention is patently to delay the Argives with her tale, in order to redefine herself in their eyes from slave to queen; her offer to stop at the outset is nothing more than a tease.[40]

40 Ganiban (2007) 74. On Hypsipyle's teasing, cf. Parkes (2012) *ad* 4.776–781, "she drops tantalizing hints that she has a riveting tale to tell".

What is particularly noteworthy about this Virgilian allusion is that Hypsipyle takes over the words not of Aeneas or any other character, but of Virgil himself, speaking *in propria persona* to Maecenas. This is one of the few passages in which the greatest Latin poet himself speaks about his narrative strategies. I believe that this is not a coincidence; Statius means for us to notice that Hypsipyle is not passively adopting the Hecale-role into which the plot of *Thebaid* has been pushing her. She is taking charge of her own characterization, elbowing Statius out of the way, and constructing her own narrative. In this light, it is worth noting that in the lines quoted above, Hypsipyle identifies herself by means of the construction "I am the one … who" (*illa ego … quae*, 5.34–35). In isolation, one might dismiss the similarity with the alternative opening words of the *Aeneid* (*ille ego qui*) in which Virgil announces his theme as too slight to be meaningful. But in conjunction with the other allusion to Virgil's own voice, that resonance might be activated for some readers.[41]

Hypsipyle's willful adoption of Virgil's own poetic persona is not only motivated by her attraction to the model of Aeneas' tale of the sack of Troy. The fact that she adopts a programmatic statement from the *Georgics*, in which the poet speaks about his own digressions, shows an awareness of the development of Latin epyllion tradition after Callimachus. Hypsipyle cannot truly occupy the place of the hero Aeneas in this epic, so she begins her own epyllion by suggesting an alternative generic model to replace the *Hecale*. The *Georgics* is a text which integrates a sub-heroic digression, but the woman whose misfortune counterbalances the eventual success of the hero Aristaeus is not an old nurse but a younger woman named Eurydice. This is, of course, also the name of Hypsipyle's mistress, with whom Hypsipyle will trade places. In her first words Hypsipyle identifies herself as a "bereft nurse" (*altricem … orbam*, 4.778); this is the same adjective she applies again to herself (5.618) and also to her mistress after the death of Opheltes (*orbamque … Eurydicen*, 5.631–632).

In the confrontation as staged by Statius, Queen Hypsipyle is matched against King Lycurgus in a heroic confrontation and she comes away the victor. That is the high point of her self-redefinition as wandering queen. When Lycurgus threatens to put her to the sword, the Seven stand by her. In a remarkable passage, each is named in turn: Tydeus (*Oeneius heros*, 661), Capaneus (664), Hippomedon (665), Parthenopaeus (*Erymanthius*, 665), Adrastus (667), Amphiaraus (669). All are named, save Polynices. The effect of this mini-

41 As suggested by Gibson (2004) 158.

catalogue is to put Hypsipyle as a temporary substitute in the place of the son of Oedipus: this is not the Seven against Thebes, but the Seven against Nemea. Thus the inset narrative about Hypsipyle truly functions as a carefully inverted image of the framing plot.[42] In the main narrative, the six allies stand by Polynices and with disastrous result attempt to vindicate his half-claim on the throne of Thebes; in the inset digression, the six allies stand by Hypsipyle and successfully defend her from an apparently unwarranted death.

This inverted mirroring of the heroic main plot within a digression is a feature of epyllion. Theseus survives his encounter with the bull of Marathon, but Hecale dies. Aristaeus loses his bees and gets them back again; Orpheus loses Eurydice, gets her back and loses her again. Both of those epyllia have unhappy female inset narratives contrasting with successful heroic exploit in the frame. Hypsipyle has refused to play that role; she will not be Hecale; she has rebranded herself as not a humble nurse but a queen and mother. She therefore needs a different epyllion as a model for the narrative: an epyllion with an unsuccessful, or at least equivocal, heroic narrative as the frame, and a happy ending for the woman in the inset. The surprise at the end of *Thebaid* 5 is that the final epyllion to serve as model is not the *Hecale* but Catullus 64; and, for once, Hypsipyle is surprised, too.

One of the most distinctive features of Hypsipyle's long Lemnian narrative is her confidence as a narrator. She displays an almost Olympian knowledge of events on heaven and earth. She acts decisively and heroically, but in a way that leaves her free from any blame in the Lemnian massacre despite her detailed narrative of individual murders. It is no wonder that Lycurgus and Eurydice think it is a pack of lies. The first phase of her story is the murder of the men of Lemnos, where, as noted, the model is Aeneas' tale of the sack of Troy. The next phase is the arrival of the Argonauts at Lemnos, where she shifts from playing the role of Aeneas to that of Dido, the tragic queen who invites a visiting hero into her home and kingdom.[43] But she is careful to represent herself as a blameless and anger-free version of that model. Her final act in the first phase of the narrative is to pile up a fake funeral pyre for her father, Thoas, whom she has secretly saved from the massacre (5.313–319). The extensive similarities with Dido's fake pyre for Aeneas mainly serve to highlight the extreme difference between the two women. Dido creates a fiction in order to enable her rage and madness to bring about her own suicide; Hypsipyle creates a fiction in order to save her life from the furious and insane women all around her. At the end of the

42 For a different approach to the mirroring of frame and inset, see Vessey (1973) 173–187.

43 On this shift, see Ganiban (2007) 80.

second phase, when she watches Jason sail off into the distance, Hypsipyle is annoyed that he is abandoning his sons, but unlike Dido she does not overreact. Dido, like Hecale, is another type of the doomed hostess giving hospitality to a hero, which is precisely the role Hypsipyle is trying to evade at Nemea. When, later in the book, the people of Nemea momentarily think that Hypsipyle has been put to death by Lycurgus, the passage is modelled upon the reaction of the people of Carthage to the suicide of Dido.[44] But Hypsipyle is not dead; it is Lycurgus who is in danger. Hypsipyle is no more Dido than she is Hecale. The other woman she is careful to distinguish herself from is Medea: *alios, Colchi, generatis amores* (5.458).[45] Until the end of her speech, Hypsipyle is in complete control of the literary models she imitates.

After Hypsipyle's retrospective narrative ends, her narrative control ends, and her fortunes seem to take a turn for the worse as the snake attacks Opheltes. The snake is too large to fit comfortably in the miniature landscape of Nemea, having invaded from a larger epic world.[46] The Seven kill the monster in an echo of the feats of Hercules at Nemea and Theseus at Marathon. But the Argives belong to epic, not epyllion, and their ultimate mission is doomed; which means in turn that Hypsipyle must have the reciprocal fate; she will be saved. Meanwhile Hypsipyle is at her lowest point, mourning her surrogate son Opheltes, whose death she has caused by her negligence. On the point of being executed as a slave by Lycurgus, the fortunes of the former queen of Lemnos are at their lowest ebb when they change dramatically. She is accepted by the Argives as a queen and given armed protection. She reaps the reciprocal benefit of the hospitality she has shown to the heroes in a way Hecale could not. This is the reward of her self-redefinition from slave to queen, and she is the author of her own destiny to a remarkable degree. However, her final transformation from nurse of Opheltes to mother of Thoas and Euneos is accomplished not by her own narrative skills, but by the unexpected intervention of Bacchus, who has a different epyllion in mind.

That intervention is foreshadowed at the only point at which Hypsipyle is not in complete control of her own narrative. Until near the end, she has claimed to know a surprising amount about the malevolent agency of Venus

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44 Compare 5.691–698 with *A.* 4.666–671. I owe this point to Tom Shores.

45 For Hypsipyle's jealousy and dislike of Medea, cf. Ov. *Ep.* 6.75–164. On the Hypsipyle episode as a *Herois*, see Augoustakis (2010) 32.

46 I owe this point to Laura de Glopper. See 5.513–517, esp. the metapoetic *tenuat* (515). As Vessey (1973) 187 points out, the description of the Nemean snake is strongly reminiscent of the Theban serpent in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (3.26–94). On the epic affiliation of the snake, see Soerink (2014b) 57–67.

and the Furies at Lemnos. We may justify that knowledge on the grounds that Bacchus appeared to her as she was escorting her father to his ship and revealed to them the role of the gods (5.271–284). When she herself flees Lemnos, she complains that Bacchus failed to make a second appearance and permitted her to be enslaved (*sed non iterum obuius Euhan*, 5.496). Throughout her long speech, she has modeled herself on Aeneas, but here, in her ignorance, she is perhaps most truly like him. One of the ironies of the *Aeneid* is that the hero complains about having been abandoned by the gods just when we know that he has been rescued. When Aeneas first identifies himself in Virgil's epic, he implicitly complains that his mother has abandoned him; he does not know that he is in fact speaking to her (*A*. 1.381–385). Just so, we know, but Hypsipyle does not, that at this very moment Bacchus is present and actively intervening on her behalf. It was he who created the drought (4.652–710) and it was he who contrived the meeting between Hypsipyle and the Argives (4.746). And we know that we will meet him again soon.

Happy Endings

The climax of Book 5 comes when Hypsipyle's luck suddenly changes: on the point of execution as a faithless nurse, she is reunited with her sons. The transition from slave to queen is accompanied by a transition in terms of her family relationships. The fact that she is no longer a nurse but a mother underlines the way she has escaped the role of Hecale. This reversal of fortune is a classic example of dramatic *peripeteia*, derived from the recognition-scene at the end of Euripides' play. But Statius reinterprets the tragic peripeteia in terms of the sudden salvation or loss which is one important characteristic of epyllion.[47] As in Euripides' play, the sons of Hypsipyle had arrived at the house of Lycurgus earlier; but only now do they recognize their mother. A few letters preserved on papyrus tell us that Dionysus appeared *ex machina* at the end of the *Hypsipyle* to guarantee the happy ending; Bacchus plays the same role here (*tu, gentis conditor, Euhan*, 5.712).[48] But Statius once again reinterprets a Euripidean plot element through the medium of epyllion. When her sons rush to her side, Hypsipyle stands there in shocked astonishment:

47 The *peripeteia* of the *Hecale* has likewise been viewed in the light of tragic models: Ambühl (2004) 27–28.

48 See Soerink (2014a) 179.

illa uelut rupes inmoto saxea uisu
haeret et expertis non audet credere diuis.
Stat. *Theb*. 5.723–724

She stays fixed like a stony rock, her eyes unmoving, not daring to trust the gods she has experienced.

This is an unmistakable echo of a famous phrase Catullus used to describe the shock of Ariadne upon discovering her abandonment by Theseus:

necdum etiam sese quae uisit uisere credit, …
saxea ut effigies bacchantis, prospicit, eheu,
prospicit …
Catul. 64.55, 61–62

Not yet does she believe what she is seeing … like a stone statue of a Maenad she looks out, alas, she looks out …

Both women are compared to stones in their motionless disbelief, but in other ways they are opposites. Ariadne is like the statue of a maenad, but Hypsipyle is the one who is in danger of being torn apart by the eager embraces of her sons (5.721–722). Ariadne cannot believe her misfortune, whereas Hypsipyle cannot believe her luck.[49] Of course, the true relevance of Ariadne here is that her abandonment and mistreatment by Theseus is about to be compensated by her immortal marriage to Bacchus. This happy ending is adumbrated by famous description of the thiasos of the god as he arrives, at the end of the great ecphrasis in Catullus 64. The Hypsipyle digression comes to a conclusion with an allusion to that passage:[50]

addita signa polo, laetoque ululante tumultu
tergaque et aera dei motas crepuere per auras.
Stat. *Theb*. 5.729–730

49 Soerink (2014b) *ad* 5.723–724 rejects this allusion, but the fact that there are also allusions to Virgilian similes here does nothing to diminish the self-evident presence of Catullus, both in the pleonastic *saxea* and in the context of female stunned disbelief, which is completely different from the contexts of the Virgilian passages.

50 The signs in heaven also allude to the catasterism of Ariadne's crown, which in Ovid's telling immediately followed upon her rescue by Bacchus: *Met*. 8.177–182. See also Augoustakis (2010) 57.

> Signs were also manifest in heaven, cries of tumultuous joy and the drums and cymbals of the god crashed through the resonant air.

Like Ariadne, Hypsipyle has suffered great loss, but has been saved by Bacchus, not as a lover, but as a granddaughter. Like Ariadne, she is saved at the moment of her greatest despair, when she has lost all hope for herself. The *deus ex machina* at the end of Euripides' *Hypsipyle* is filtered through the medium of the contrasting ecphrasis/digression from the genre of epyllion.

So the Hypsipyle-epyllion begins in evocation of the *Hecale* but ends with the heroine finding a happier model in the Ariadne of Catullus 64, who also went from happiness to despair to happiness again. This confirmation of a happy ending for Hypsipyle provides the contrast required by the rules of the epyllion genre with the success of the framing narrative. In Catullus 64, the happy and eternal union between Bacchus and the mortal Ariadne contrasts with the union between Thetis and the mortal Peleus in the frame narrative, which we know is fated to have a bitter ending. The *Hecale* will not work as a model for *Thebaid* 5 in part because of Hypsipyle's unwillingness to occupy the role of aged nurse and hostess who dies in the course of the heroic narrative, but also because it would imply that the Argive expedition against Thebes will have a successful outcome like Theseus' expedition against the bull of Marathon or Hercules' against the Nemean lion. The over-determined, predestined disaster at Thebes requires a redemptive inset narrative.

It is fitting that Book 5 comes to a formal end with a final reminiscence of Callimachus' *Hecale*, only with a different victim. Amphiaraus confirms the will of the gods that the child Opheltes was to die and states that enduring honours must be paid to him, which will keep his new name, Archemorus, alive forever. The diegesis of the *Hecale* tells us that Theseus returns from his successful exploit to find his hostess dead and he promises to name an Athenian deme after her and to found the precinct of Zeus Hecaleus. The ending of Callimachus' text does not survive except in scraps, but the influence of this kind of paradoxically grand memorial as a closural gesture in the genre of epyllion can be seen in the parodic ending of the pseudo-Virgilian *Culex* or *Gnat*. This text is perhaps more a parody of epyllion than a straight example of it, but even so a parody can be quite useful for illustrating the expectations of genre.

The *Culex* tells the story of a shepherd who falls asleep by a spring. When the guardian snake is about to attack him, a gnat stings him awake. The shepherd swats the gnat and kills the snake in a mock-epic battle that has some similarities to the fight between the Seven and the serpent in our text. In this case, the snake is not the direct instrument of the inadvertent death of the tiny, inno-

cent creature, but it is still the catalyst. Whether or not Statius was conscious of evoking that pseudo-Vergilian text, it was certainly parodying elements of the tradition within which Statius was working.[51] This can be seen most clearly in the way it ends. The ghost of the gnat visits the shepherd in his sleep and rebukes him for killing the creature who saved his life. The poem ends with the shepherd erecting a memorial to the tiny gnat, the scapegoat whose death permitted his own life. It is a *tumulus*, decorated with marble and flowers, and the final lines of the epyllion give its dedicatory inscription. The humour resides in the contrast between the ridiculously small size of the gnat and the monumentality of his tomb. This paradox of scale is a key feature of Opheltes, even though a detailed description of his tomb is postponed until the next book.[52] This feature is linked to Callimachus' Hecale/Molorchus tradition, in which the juxtaposition of the large and the small is a major theme. The gnat and the mouse Molorchus hunts are light-hearted versions of the tragic fate of Opheltes, whose symbolic significance outweighs his tiny size. And just as the gnat and the mouse, as well as the tiny hut of Hecale, are Callimachean metapoetic symbols for the heroic smallness of epyllion itself, so too does the small size and paradoxically large significance of Opheltes symbolize the epic-in-miniature which is Book 5 of the *Thebaid*.[53]

Hypsipyle's ultimately successful self-refashioning as queen and mother means that she is no longer available to serve in the Hecale role, so another humble, sub-heroic, sacrificial offering must be substituted. Over the course of *Thebaid* 5, Hypsipyle clearly trades places with Lycurgus as sovereign and Eurydice as mother. At the baby's funeral, Eurydice complains bitterly that Hypsipyle has taken her rightful place, both in raising the child and in mourning for him (6.161–167, 182–184). The irony is that we know, and Eurydice does not, that Hypsipyle has also traded places with Opheltes in occupying the role of the fated sacrificial scapegoat.

Murder in Plain Sight

It is significant that *Thebaid* 5 comes to a final conclusion not with the description of Opheltes' tomb, which would make it like the *Culex*, but with the solemn

51 There seem to be some echoes of the *Culex* in Statius' description of the Nemean snake; see Soerink (2014b) 67.

52 See 5.534–537, esp. *tanto … sepulcro*, 537.

53 On the Callimachean symbols, see Ambühl (2004) 40–44.

declaration of posthumous honours by Amphiaraus. It turns out that this epyllion, which starts just like the *Hecale*, also ends just like the *Hecale*. But, due to the actions of Hypsipyle, both in her heroic self-presentation and in her negligence as a child-minder, there have been some major changes in the middle. She has escaped her literary fate by having someone else die in her place, and the posthumous honors decreed at the end are not for her. Was this an accident? In Statius' version of events, Lycurgus knows of an oracle foretelling that he, which is to say his household, will supply the first victim in the war against Thebes (*prima … funera*, 5.645–647). The name which corresponds to that status of first death, "Archemorus", is formally bestowed upon Opheltes by Amphiaraus at the end of the book, as in the usual version of the myth.[54] But Hypsipyle in her grief applies the name to the dead Opheltes over a hundred lines earlier, which, as Shackleton Bailey points out, must mean two things: that the name was part of the prophecy, and that Hypsipyle knows about the prophecy, too.[55] What no one at Nemea knows is who this victim, destined to be named "Archemorus", will be. In the next book, Eurydice reproaches herself for having assumed that this prophecy about the Theban war could have nothing to do with her tiny son (6.142). But Hypsipyle knows what happened to Hecale immediately after Theseus left her, and she knows that some member of Lycurgus' household will be the first to die in the course of the Argive expedition. Those facts mean that she herself is the most likely candidate for fulfilling the role of "Archemorus"; so she needs to arrange a substitute.

When Hypsipyle leaves Opheltes unattended, she seems to do so in defiance of another prophecy. Hyginus records that the boy was not to be put down on the ground before he could walk, so he says that Hypsipyle left him on a tall clump of parsley.[56] Statius does not mention this prophecy, so, when his Hypsipyle takes no such precautions, putting him directly on the ground, it is not clear whether we are supposed to find this surprising.[57] If Statius' audience

54 5.738–739; cf. Apollod. 3.4.4.

55 5.609, with Shackleton Bailey (2003) ad loc. The alternative is to convict Statius of gross compositional incompetence. For a review of efforts to address this problem, see Soerink (2014b) 74–75.

56 Hyg. *Fab*. 74. When Hypsipyle later discovers the remains of Opheltes, she collapses onto the "harmful earth" (*terraeque inlisa nocenti*, 5.592), which may simply be a reference to the fact that the serpent came from the earth (*terrigena … serpens*, 506). But it might strike a different chord with an audience familiar with the prophecy recorded by Hyginus. On the prophecy, see Soerink (2014b) 15–19.

57 On Hypsipyle's actions, see Parkes (2012) *ad* 4.785–789 and 793–795; see also Augoustakis (2010) 39.

knew that prophecy, her action would seem even more negligent. In any case, even an ancient audience might think it grossly negligent to leave a fussing and actively crawling baby wide awake and completely unattended in a field, as is demonstrated when Eurydice makes that very point in the next book (6.153–159).[58]

When, just after Opheltes' death, Hypsipyle prematurely calls the boy "Archemorus", perhaps she is quick to make the deduction that Opheltes has fulfilled the prophecy, but, if so, it is surprising that she has been able to think so clearly in the midst of wild grief. Statius drops a strong hint, but only a hint, that Hypsipyle has been pondering the identity of "Archemorus" before anyone else: perhaps from the instant she first encountered the Argive army. Did she, from that very moment, orchestrate the fulfillment of the prophecy by Opheltes rather than herself? It would be a delicious irony if a literary character who spends too much effort in Ovid's *Heroides* distinguishing herself from Jason's other, wicked, girlfriend, Medea, should also turn out to be guilty of deliberate infanticide.

One of the narrative pleasures of *Thebaid* 5 is to wonder about the reliability of Hypsipyle's autobiographical narrative. She manages to present herself as a queen of Lemnos and yet also completely blameless in the unfortunate events that happened there, which she is nevertheless able to describe in surprising detail. She even goes so far as to deny any stain on her chastity, claiming, against all other accounts and against all plausibility, that she was an unwilling partner in her relationship with Jason.[59] Lycurgus and Eurydice separately accuse her of fabricating every aspect of her past.[60] This prompts a question: if they were not certain that Hypsipyle was completely innocent in the slaughter of the men and boys of Lemnos, why did they entrust their son to her? This is more or less the reproach that Eurydice throws at herself (6.149–152). She now sees the death of Opheltes as the final crime of a serial murderer. The presence of Hypsipyle's sons at Nemea is proof that she did not murder them, but does it confirm her entire account of her innocent conduct during the massacre?

Statius has not convicted Hypsipyle of any crime. It is possible to accept her version of events at Lemnos and to see her as guilty in Nemea of nothing more than a moment of inattention which was ordained by the Fates (*sic Parcae uoluere*, 4.787). Hypsipyle herself blames the gods (*sontes … dei*, 5.610–611; *nosco deos*, 620). Should we believe her? She claims to have had a premonitory vision

58 On Opheltes' crawling, see Parkes (2012) *ad* 4.793–800 and 802; see also Augoustakis (2010) 41.

59 As noted by Gibson (2004) 164.

60 Lycurgus: 5.658–660 (*mendacia*); Eurydice: 6.149–152.

of Venus (622), but we know that the only god orchestrating the present events is Bacchus. Even when she takes back the accusation against the gods and seems to accept personal responsibility for what she has done, she still really claims to have been nothing more than an instrument of the Fates (*ipsa ego te … exposui Fatis*, 623–624). But Statius has also left hints that make it possible for a reader to interpret events differently. When she runs back to Opheltes, she is already sure of what has happened to him (*iam certa malorum / mentis ab augurio*, 5.545–546). Is that because of quasi-maternal premonitions, or because she designed events to happen this way?

There is no one to corroborate Hypsipyle's Lemnian narrative, and even if we accept it, she demonstrates an intimate acquaintance with child-murder, including many men and boys of her own family (5.218–235). She then makes the inexplicable decision to abandon Opheltes. She has the means and opportunity to commit murder, and her history is potentially incriminating. The one thing obviously lacking is motive. It is easy to see why readers have tended to believe Hypsipyle's claim that Opheltes' death was an accident. Statius makes it abundantly clear that she loves the boy. We see that in her grief at his death, and even more clearly in Eurydice's speech in Book 6. Hypsipyle might have been able to fake her reaction to discovering Opheltes' body, but Eurydice, even as she accuses Hypsipyle of negligent homicide, acknowledges her former slave's grief and admits that the baby was fonder of his nurse than his mother (6.161–163, 180–184). This is why Eurydice's accusations of malice against her former slave seem hysterical and unlikely. She can offer no motive. Why would Hypsipyle kill a baby she loved and who loved her, even if it was not her own?

Our examination of the generic affiliations of *Thebaid* 5 can provide this final piece of the puzzle. Hypsipyle acts out of self-preservation. She sees that she is facing the prospect of becoming the first fatality of the Theban war (Archemora?). Eurydice, by contrast, assumes that the prophecy about her household and the Theban war must have to do with a grown man (6.141–142). Statius hints that this is why Lycurgus himself has not volunteered to join the Argive expedition. In the midst of their quarrel, Tydeus calls Lycurgus a coward for having fail to enlist (*timidone parum?* 5.676). A few lines earlier, Statius made it clear that Lycurgus was not in fact a coward (*haud animi uacuus*), but that he was kept back by his "altars and temples" (5.644), which is to say, his duties as priest of the local sanctuary of Zeus. But in the very next line Statius admits that Lycurgus was also thinking of the prophecy, and this is why he viewed the Argive expedition with loathing. Statius does not state it explicitly, but he drops some very heavy hints: Lycurgus believes that *he* is the fated Archemorus. That is why he has not joined the Argive expedition. The wording of the oracle encouraged this misinterpretation, because it referred

to Lycurgus himself as making the first sacrificial offering of death, when it really meant that the offering would be provided from his household (*prima, Lycurge, dabis Dircaeo funera bello*, 5.647). Eurydice must also have interpreted the oracle as referring to her husband. It never occurred to them that their tiny son (nor, much less, their wet-nurse) might be implicated in this prophecy of death in an epic war.

Unlike Eurydice, Hypsipyle knows what genre we are in. In the world of epyllion, the fate of great heroes may be intertwined with the fate of the humblest creatures. She sees that she is in danger of fulfilling simultaneously the roles of Hecale and Archemorus/a. For all she loves Opheltes, she has a rare gift for self-preservation. She urgently needs to find a different member of Lycurgus' household to fulfill the prophecy and die in her stead. Opheltes is conveniently to hand. She leaves him to the tender mercies of the enormous snake that she must know lives nearby. Statius says that the local farmers (*agricolae*, 5.512) know the snake well and Hypsipyle is clearly very much at home in this part of the countryside. The snake guards the area around a local temple of Zeus, and Statius leaves it ambiguous as to whether this is the same temple of which Lycurgus is priest. Hypsipyle's grief at the death of Opheltes is real, but her mask drops for a moment when she slips and prematurely calls him Archemorus. Hypsipyle has thought harder than her master and mistress about the potential ironies of the prophecy, and she also has a better understanding of literary genre. Lycurgus and Eurydice cannot see the danger to their baby son, because they are thinking in terms of high martial epic. So they think the offering they will have to make (*dabis*) must be Lycurgus himself. Hypsipyle understands that the prophecy is ambiguous: it may refer to any member of the family or household of the kind. She understands the danger to herself because she has read Callimachus (or has chatted to Theseus on Lemnos) and thus she recognises the role she is in imminent danger of playing. Statius hides the murder of Opheltes in plain sight. He shows us the act being committed. But he conceals the motive, so we, like the Argives, are inclined to ignore the meaning of a scene we have witnessed with our own eyes. It is only when we put *Thebaid* 5 in its proper context as an epyllion that we can finally see precisely why Hypsipyle felt that she had to murder Opheltes in order to save herself.

Maybe Statius was nodding when he made Hypsipyle use the name Archemorus before she should. But it is surprising that such a glaring error was not picked up in the drawn-out process of obsessive revision and public recitation. Maybe Hypsipyle used the name because she was thinking fast, despite her grief. Maybe Hypsipyle really did put down Opheltes because she was distracted. But she forgot about him for an awfully long time. Maybe that inattention to the baby is a sign of nothing more than benign self-absorption. Maybe

she was just a bad care-giver, because she lacked the experience of raising her own sons. Maybe she did not know about the snake who guarded the area and its temple, even though she seems to know the area very well. Maybe it is just a coincidence that male children close to Hypsipyle (but not her own sons) tend to die when she is around.[61] Hypsipyle herself links the death of Opheltes with the murders on Lemnos, interpreting it as paying a debt of wickedness owed there.[62] But perhaps the link is simpler. Hypsipyle gives a plausible account of her own conduct. But maybe, just maybe, she is an accomplished liar and a serial killer, first on Lemnos and now in Nemea. Maybe she put Opheltes down deliberately, fully knowing that the snake was in the area. Maybe she delivered such a long, drawn-out account of her own life in order to buy time for the snake to come. Maybe her Lemnian narrative is so convincing, not only because it is well practiced, but because of the urgency of this occasion: she already knows, as she tells it, that she will soon need the Argives to protect her from a charge of murder. In her initial speech of mourning she is already contemplating the prospect of her execution (*moritura*, 5.623). She then offers to the Seven to forfeit her life (628–637). Of course, they (implicitly) refuse to take her life, which becomes a rehearsal for the way they leap to her defense when Lycurgus genuinely threatens her. Hypsipyle fools them all; but, just like all murderers in literature, she makes a single tell-tale mistake: in her (genuine) grief at seeing the corpse of Opheltes, she slips for a single moment and calls him the name which she has secretly ensured that he will bear: Archemorus.

How Not to Write an *Argonautica*

On the level of the narrative, Book 5, along with the drought in Book 4 and the funeral and games in Book 6, serves, as is very well known, as a delay in the tragic progress towards Thebes.[63] We have seen that Book 5 begins with a Callimachean metaphor which warns us that the epic flow of the *Thebaid* will contract for a while into a smaller stream (*amnem minorem*, 5.2). This holds true for the duration of the book, which is focussed on the epyllion of Hypsipyle, and her Lemnian adventures comprise a digression embedded within

61 For the deaths of Hypsipyle's close male relations on Lemnos, see 5.218–230.

62 When the Lemnian women discover that Hypsipyle has not killed her father, they demand a crime from her (*facinus reposcunt*, 5.489); she later claims to have repaid that debt via Opheltes (*exsolui tibi, Lemne, nefas*, 5.628), on which see Soerink (2014b) ad loc.

63 See Vessey (1973) 165–170 and Parkes (2012) xvii–xx.

the Hypsipyle episode, which is a further digression within the Argive expedition. One aspect of that digression within a digression is worth noting: the role of the Argo. When Hypsipyle tells the story of the Lemnian massacre and of the subsequent arrival of the Argonauts, Statius is interacting very closely with an alternative epic tradition.[64] Indeed, if one can posit that there was a sub-genre of collective epic with many heroes, as opposed to the individual epic with one primary hero, then the *Thebaid* belongs to the same species of poem as the *Argonautica*-epics written by Apollonius of Rhodes, Varro of Atax and Valerius Flaccus.

We can read *Thebaid* 5 as a rebuke to the Latin poets who thought the way to write a Latin epic of Alexandrian spirit was to translate or adapt Apollonius' poem. Statius makes the point that, if you want to imitate the great Hellenistic epic, the *Argonautica* of Apollonius, which was itself a great innovation in terms of scale, subject matter and characterization, you need to emulate its spirit rather than its content. If formal inventiveness is the hallmark of Hellenistic aesthetics, then translation or even loose adaptation is its antithesis. The *Thebaid* as a whole is a testament to the notion that one should emulate the spirit rather than the letter of Alexandrianism. That principle is stated most clearly by Virgil at the start of the third book of the *Georgics*, when he dismisses the themes treated by the great Hellenistic poets as having become hackneyed. When Virgil enumerates those themes, he includes themes such as Hylas, who was an Argonaut, and whose story had been narrated by Apollonius, Theocritus and Propertius (*G.* 3.3–8). When Statius imitates that Virgilian list of worn-out, hackneyed epic themes in the *Siluae* (2.7.48–53), he explicitly includes the voyage of the Argo alongside the fall of Troy and the *Odyssey*. This must, as Gibson has pointed out, cast some light on his opinion about Valerius' epic.[65]

Statius has learned the lesson taught by Virgil: to be true to the spirit of Alexandria, one must make poetry new, even if that means, paradoxically, returning to the themes which the great Hellenistic poets had considered trite. Hence the *Aeneid*. A thoroughly Callimachean epic in spirit, it paradoxically embraces the very sort of cyclic epic material that Callimachus had rejected. The most obviously cyclic and hackneyed material Virgil treats is the Sack of Troy, and the way he makes it new is to tell it from the first-person perspective of Aeneas. Statius goes one better. For his overall subject matter, the war of the Seven against Thebes, he chose a topic which had become synonymous with

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64 See Gibson (2004) 149–153. Also with Euripides' *Hypsipyle*; see Soerink (2014a) 185–186.

65 Gibson (2004) 152–153. For a different aspect of Statius' engagement with Valerius, see Parkes (2009).

bad, bloated poetry in the Roman re-interpretation of Alexandrian aesthetics. In addition to the archaic Cyclic *Thebaid*, there was another Greek epic by that name by Antimachus of Colophon. We know that Callimachus despised at least one of Antimachus' elegiac poems, but we do not know what he thought of his epic.[66] That does not matter too much, since Latin poets were happy to make the leap. Catullus uses Antimachus as the emblem of bloated poetry (95.10), the antithesis of the learned epyllion of his friend Cinna. Catullus does not explicitly mention Antimachus' *Thebaid* in that poem, but all the other works he discusses there are hexameter, so it is present by implication. In any case, when Propertius (1.7, 1.9) wishes to invent a fictional writer of bad poetry, it is no surprise that this hapless figure, Ponticus, is trying to compose an epic *Thebaid*. Simultaneously the heir of cyclic epic and of Antimachus, Ponticus is definitely the antithesis of Callimachus.[67] Statius' decision to write a Callimachean *Thebaid* is a witty response to Propertius, embodying an amplification of Virgil's dictum about redeeming the very subject matter which the arbiters of Alexandrianism had dismissed as bloated.

Valerius took a different route. Whatever the merits of his version of the Argo story, he cannot be said to have chosen a novel topic. In its own day, the *Argonautica* of Apollonius was an innovative idea, but not so Valerius' imitation. What Statius has done in his Hypsipyle epyllion is to point out how to do the Argo story right. The true Alexandrian spirit of innovation would dictate framing a familiar story in a new and unexpected way. Thus Statius repackages Apollonius' Hellenistic epic in the format of a Hellenistic epyllion after the manner of Callimachus, thereby renewing the spirit of both Alexandrian models and eschewing slavish imitation. Catullus 64 is once again an important precedent, as an innovative, miniature take on the Argo story, reimagined as epyllion. The key difference is that Statius puts the Argo in his innermost digression, whereas for Catullus it is the outermost frame.[68] Statius knows better than Valerius that, in order to make the material fresh, one should do precisely what Virgil did to the Cyclic story of the Sack of Troy: tell it from the first-person point of view of one of the participants. Statius tells part of the story of the Argo from a woman's point of view, and from the perspective of a possibly unreliable narrator, which adds to the novelty. He follows, as usual, in the footsteps of Virgil, taking epic material which had become over familiar,

66 See Krevans (1993).

67 On the fictiveness of Ponticus the straw-man, see Heslin (2011).

68 Statius foregrounds his Catullan model at that very point: the first lines of the Argo-section of Hypsipyle's narrative (5.335–337) echo the first line of Catullus 64; thus Gibson (2004) 168.

even cliched, and breathing new life into it. Statius takes the Argo-story, the *Thebaid*'s rival as the standard topic for collective epic at Rome, and turns it inside-out. He makes it an inset digression within an epyllion whose outer frame conceals a murder mystery. This is how Valerius should have approached this material if he had wanted to make it truly fresh and new.

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Becoming Sisters: Antigone and Argia in Statius' *Thebaid*

Nikoletta Manioti

Introduction

Night has fallen on the battlefield of Thebes. In the moonlight a woman wanders among the corpses, searching for Polynices, the exile son of Oedipus who raised an army against his own home. The light falls on his clothes, that she herself had woven, now drenched in his blood.[1] She falls on the corpse and cries out … "Husband!" Meet Argia, Polynices' widow, the woman who put Antigone to shame by arriving there first. But what exactly is the relationship between the two heroines in the last book of Statius' *Thebaid*? To find out, let us start at the beginning.

In most extant versions dealing with the death of Polynices (A. *Th.* 1032 ff.; S. *Ant.*; E. *Ph.* 1745–1746; Apollod. 3.78) it is always his sister Antigone who undertakes to bury him disregarding the ban imposed by Creon.[2] Argia is merely mentioned as the distant—anonymous—wife of Polynices (τᾶς Πολυνείκεος / … νύμφας, E. *Ph.* 135–136),[3] and their marriage is possibly tinted with a hint of apprehension when Antigone exclaims ἰὼ δυσπότμων κασίγνητε γάμων κυρήσας ("alas, brother, you obtained an ill-stared marriage", S. *Ant.* 870). Statius, on the other hand, follows a version where both women attempt to bury Polynices, found elsewhere only in Hyginus' summaries (*Fab.* 72) and on a

1 All translations are by the author. On weaving and the female voice in this scene, see Dietrich (1999) 47.

2 Euripides' *Antigone* differed from the Sophoclean homonymous drama according to Aristophanes Byzantinus (κεῖται δὲ ἡ μυθοποιία καὶ παρ' Εὐριπίδῃ ἐν Ἀντιγόνῃ· πλὴν ἐκεῖ φωραθεῖσα μετὰ τοῦτο Αἵμονι δίδοται πρὸς γάμου κοινωνίαν καὶ τίκτει τὸν Μαίονα, "the myth is also found in Euripides' *Antigone*, only in that play, when she was discovered after that, she was given to Haemon in marriage, and gave birth to Maeon", Ar. Byz. 1) and a *scholium* in S. *Ant.* 1351 (ὅτι διαφέρει τῆς Εὐριπίδου Ἀντιγόνης αὕτη ὅτι φωραθεῖσα ἐκείνη διὰ τὸν Αἵμονος ἔρωτα ἐξεδόθη πρὸς γάμον, ἐνταῦθα δὲ τοὐναντίον, "this Antigone differs from Euripides' in that when she was discovered, thanks to Haemon's love for her, she was given to him in marriage, while here it is the opposite"). The surviving fragments, however, do not make any reference to Argia, and in that play, according to Webster's reconstruction (1967) 182, Antigone would have been helped by Haemon in burying her brother. See also Pollmann (2004) 44.

3 This appears in Antigone's question to her tutor about the identity of Tydeus.

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late 2nd century AD Roman sarcophagus which depicts Antigone and Argia as they try to lift the corpse.[4]

The presence of sisters-in-law at the funeral of a hero killed in battle in front of his city is in fact a rare occurrence, but Statius does have an extant precedent to draw from: the lament for Hector in *Iliad* 24, conducted by his mother Hecuba, wife Andromache and sister-in-law Helen. At first sight, Argia corresponds to Andromache as the hero's widow, while Antigone matches Helen as the sister-in-law of the widow, who in Statius also happens to be the sister of the dead hero. There are, of course, important differences too, such as the fact that Homer's heroines are the wives of two brothers, whereas Antigone has no husband of her own. Polynices is the common object of affection for the two Statian heroines, a situation which is comparable to, and yet different from,[5] Helen's privileged bond to Andromache's husband Hector which I examine below.[6]

As this essay will show, the Flavian poet intentionally evokes the Homeric sisters-in-law in his descriptions of Antigone and Argia, both in the final scene in Book 12 and in anticipatory glimpses of the two protagonists throughout the poem. He also benefits from the Homeric treatment of the bond in general. His aim is to prepare the reader for their encounter in Book 12 which transforms them, even momentarily, into actual sisters.[7] Already their common interest in Polynices and their role as his mourners make them sisters, a notion which their comparison to the Heliades further encourages.[8] In addition to that, Statius offers a portrayal of Argia and Antigone which abounds in references to specific sisters and their actions, as well as to the more general characteristic

4 *Antigona soror et Argia coniunx clam noctu Polynicis corpus sublatum in eadem pyra, qua Eteocles sepultus est, imposuerunt. quae cum a custodibus deprehensae essent, Argia profugit, Antigona ad regem est perducta* ("His sister Antigone and his wife Argia lifted Polynices' body secretly during the night, and placed it on the same pyre on which Eteocles had been cremated. When they were apprehended by the guards, Argia fled and Antigone was taken to the king", Hyg. *Fab.* 72); *LIMC* I 1 s.v. *Antigone*, No. 5 and 11.

5 I thank the anonymous reviewer for this point.

6 Importantly, Antigone's blood relationship to Argia's husband Polynices has no counterpart in the Homeric poem.

7 Which goes beyond "sisterhood", on which see e.g. Henderson (1993) 186–187.

8 *sic Hyperionium trepido Phaethonta sorores / fumantem lauere Pado; uixdum ille sepulcro / conditus, et flentes stabant ad flumina siluae* ("In such a way did his sisters wash still smoking Phaethon, son of Hyperion, in the warm Padus; barely had he been buried and they were standing as a forest next to the river", Stat. *Theb.* 12.413–415). See Corti (1987) 5–9 on Polynices as Phaethon in the *Thebaid*; and Bernstein (2008) 100 who argues that this comparison "equates marriage with a blood relationship".

trait of sisterly similarity that we encounter in Latin epic, and the *Thebaid* in particular.

Sisters-in-law at Troy

As Argia parts ways with the rest of the Argive women in Book 12, she tells them that she expects to be allowed into Thebes on account of the presence there of her parents-in-law and sisters-in-law (*sunt illic soceri mihi suntque sorores / coniugis, Theb.* 12.201–202).[9] Even though this argument serves her purpose of proceeding with her plan to bury Polynices unobstructed, it still presents a plausible expectation of what she might encounter by going to Thebes. To understand Argia's certainty that she will find help from an audience of parents- and, more to the point, sisters-in-law, let us briefly consider attitudes ascribed to these kinship groups in earlier literature.

Homeric sisters-in-law, for which there are distinct terms in Homeric Greek (εἰνάτηρ "wife of one's brother", or "wife of one's husband's brother", and γάλοως "sister of one's husband"),[10] seem to spend time with each other and have access to each other's chambers. In Book 3 of the *Iliad*, Iris takes the form of Laodice, Hector and Paris' sister, and consequently Helen's *γάλοως*, in order to bring Helen to the walls of Troy. Laodice's natural entrance to Helen's room (Ἑλένῃ λευκωλένῳ ἄγγελος ἦλθεν … τὴν δ' εὗρ' ἐν μεγάρῳ: … ἀγχοῦ δ' ἱσταμένη προσέφη, "she came as a messenger to Helen of the white arms … she found her in her house … standing next to her, she addressed her", 3.121, 125, 129) and her affectionate address (νύμφα φίλη, 130)[11] indicate that the two women are on good terms with one another. Another passage that illuminates the attitudes of such Homeric women is found in Book 6. Here Hector asks the maids whether his wife, currently absent from their house, might have gone to see any of her sisters-in-law (ἠέ πῃ ἐς γαλόων ἢ εἰνατέρων ἐϋπέπλων / … ἐξοίχεται, 6.378–379).[12] And it is precisely these nameless female relatives who stand around and

9 See Bernstein (2008) 97 on Argia's faith in her in-laws' goodwill due to her expectations from a virilocal marriage.

10 Liddell-Scott ad loc. suggest that both terms are used to describe the bond of sisters-in-law regardless of the details of the marriage that produced it.

11 "my sister-in-law", lit. "dear young bride", which may be an appropriate form of address for a sister-in-law (as it is in Modern Greek) as Kirk (1985) *ad Il.* 3.130 notes.

12 One of these is Cassandra who does not interact with Andromache, or indeed any other of her female relations. She is granted a very small part in *Iliad* 24 when she is the one to spot Priam return with Hector's body (699–707); see below, n. 22.

support Andromache when she faints after finding out about Hector's death (ἀμφὶ δέ μιν γαλόῳ τε καὶ εἰνατέρες ἅλις ἔσταν, / αἵ ἑ μετὰ σφίσιν εἶχον, 22.473–474).[13]

A nuance at negative feelings, however, can be traced in Helen's lament for Hector, when she complains that some of his relatives spoke ill of her:[14]

> ἀλλ' εἴ τίς με καὶ ἄλλος ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐνίπτοι
> δαέρων ἢ γαλόων ἢ' εἰνατέρων εὐπέπλων,
> ἢ ἑκυρή— …
>
> HOM. *Il.* 24.768–770

> But if anyone else were to reprove me in the palace, one of my husband's brothers or one of his sisters or one of his brothers' wives with their beautiful robes, or my mother-in-law …

The relatives are mentioned in a very general way, but the fact that the reference to "sisters-in-law" occupies most of line 769 may suggest an allusion to Andromache; if this is true, then Helen accuses Hector's wife, who is present at the scene, of animosity against her. Such a complaint may be all the more significant since it is precisely Hector whom Helen thanks in the subsequent lines for his display of kindness (771–772). Needless to say that tragedy is more explicit in feelings between these two sisters-in-law. In Euripides' *Andromache* the title heroine calls Helen the destruction (ἄταν, 103) of Paris, Hector, Troy and herself,[15] and in the *Trojan Women* she attributes Helen's paternity to a number of evils and curses her to die.[16] Statius, however, seems to draw from Homer

13 Bettini (2013) 212 also notes this interaction, to then argue, somewhat less convincingly, that sisters-in-law would also assist at childbirth (p. 213). The harmony of "husband's sisters" and "husband's brother's wives" who sit around the same table is an indication of a household's prosperity, according to Callimachus (ταὶ δὲ θυωρὸν / εἰνάτερες γαλόῳ τε μίαν περὶ δίφρα τίθενται, *Cer.* 134–135) (Bettini ibid.).

14 See Tsagalis (2004) 99–102 on Helen's weaving of the blame of others (instead of her usual self-blame) within her lament to Hector, her "dearest brother-in-law" (p. 101).

15 Ἰλίῳ αἰπεινᾷ Πάρις οὐ γάμον ἀλλά τιν' ἄταν / ἀγάγετ' εὐναίαν εἰς θαλάμους Ἑλέναν. / ἇς ἕνεκ', ὦ Τροία, δορὶ καὶ πυρὶ δηιάλωτον / εἷλέ σ' ὁ χιλιόναυς Ἑλλάδος ὀξὺς Ἄρης / καὶ τὸν ἐμὸν μελέας πόσιν Ἕκτορα, τὸν περὶ τείχη / εἵλκυσε διφρεύων παῖς ἁλίας Θέτιδος ("Paris did not bring a wife in lofty Troy, but ruin as a consort in his bedroom, Helen. Because of her, the harsh warriors of Greece with their thousand ships seized hold of you, Troy, with spear and fire of capture, and killed my Hector, husband to miserable me; the son of sea-goddess Thetis dragged him around the city walls as he rode his chariot", E. *Andr.* 103–107).

16 ὦ Τυνδάρειον ἔρνος, οὔποτ' εἶ Διός, / πολλῶν δὲ πατέρων φημί σ' ἐκπεφυκέναι, / Ἀλάστορος μὲν

here rather than Euripides, at least as far as the attitude of the sisters-in-law is concerned.

Homeric Models in Common

The reworking of the Homeric funeral scene in *Thebaid* 12, and consequently the encounter of the Statian sisters-in-law, does not come unprepared. The Roman poet plants a number of hints in the course of the poem associating in turn Antigone and Argia with Andromache, or Helen, or both. The first such clue is found in the second book where the daughters of Adrastus are first named as rumour spreads of their impending double marriage to Polynices and Tydeus (*egregiam Argian ... / Deipylen ... iugari*, *Theb.* 2.203–204). *Argia* and its Greek counterpart *Ἀργεία*, after her native city, echoes Helen's frequent epithet in the *Iliad*, incidentally first used when she is first named also in that epic's second book (Ἀργείην Ἑλένην, *Il.* 2.161).[17] Like Argia, Helen comes from Argos, and from the perspective of the city under siege she is the foreign bride. While Argia's name points towards Helen, however, her attitude in her native city recalls Andromache. Like her Trojan model, Argia tries to talk her husband out of the war (*Theb.* 2.339–343),[18] and in her expression of anxiety about Polynices' safety (*tua me ... / angit ... salus*, 342–343) she repeats Andromache's argument that his very might is going to be her husband's doom (φθίσει σε τὸ σὸν μένος, *Il.* 6.407). On the other hand, Argia explicitly rejects Andromache's further efforts to persuade Hector by means of references to her widowhood at the beginning and end of her speech:[19] *nil foedere rupto / conubiisue super moueor uiduaque*

πρῶτον, εἶτα δὲ Φθόνου, / Φόνου τε Θανάτου θ' ὅσα τε γῆ τρέφει κακά. / οὐ γάρ ποτ' αὐχῶ Ζῆνά γ' ἐκφῦσαί σ' ἐγώ, / πολλοῖσι κῆρα βαρβάροις Ἕλλησί τε. / ὄλοιο: καλλίστων γὰρ ὀμμάτων ἄπο / αἰσχρῶς τὰ κλεινὰ πεδί' ἀπώλεσας Φρυγῶν ("Oh offspring of Tyndareos, there is no way you are Zeus' child, I say you were born of many fathers, first of the Avenging Demon, then Envy and Murder and Death and all evils the earth nourishes. I confidently declare that Zeus was never your father, doom as you have been for many barbarians as well as Greeks. Die! For with your beautiful eyes you have shamefully destroyed the famous plains of the Phrygians", E. *Tr.* 766–773).

17 Interestingly, *egregiam Argian* mirrors in reverse *Ἀργείην Ἑλένην*, with both phrases occupying the space from the beginning of the line to the strong caesura.

18 Ross (2004) xxxiii.

19 οὐδ' ἐλεαίρεις / παῖδά τε νηπίαχον καὶ ἔμ' ἄμμορον, ἣ τάχα χήρη / σεῦ ἔσομαι ("you feel pity neither for your infant son nor for ill-fated me, who will quickly become your widow", *Il.* 6.407–409); θήῃς χήρην τε γυναῖκα ("you will leave your wife a widow", 432).

iuuenta ("nor am I moved by the broken pact of our marriage and my widowed youth", *Theb.* 2.339–340).

Andromache is also evoked in Book 4, when Polynices sees Argia standing on a tower and looking at his departing army: *de turre suprema / attonitam totoque extantem corpore longe / respicit Argian* ("he looked back to Argia, frantic on the highest tower, stretching out with her whole body", 4.89–91). Here Statius is reworking a specific Homeric scene describing Andromache as she goes "on the great tower of Troy" (ἐπὶ πύργον ... μέγαν Ἰλίου, *Il.* 6.386). In her haste to reach the walls, Hector's wife is compared to a "frenzied woman" (πρὸς τεῖχος ἐπειγομένη ἀφικάνει / μαινομένῃ ἐϊκυῖα, 388–389), which explains the designation of Statius' Argia as *attonita* (*Theb.* 4.90), a term often used to denote Bacchic frenzy.[20]

However, as she mourns Polynices in Book 12, Argia twice insists on taking the blame for the war, which is not something Andromache ever did. The first such instance forms part of a cunning speech where she is trying to part from the rest of the Argive women without their objecting to her plan: *tantae quae sola ruinae / causa fui* ("I who have been the only cause of such great misfortune", 12.198–199). If that was pure rhetoric, the second time that she admits her responsibility for the war cannot be discredited, since it is made to Polynices himself: *quid queror? ipsa dedi bellum maestumque rogaui / ipsa patrem ut talem nunc te complexa tenerem* ("why do I complain? I myself gave you this war and asked my sad father so that I might now hold you like this in my embrace", 336–337). Argia's awareness of being the cause of war recalls Helen's speech to Hector when she assumes, together with Paris, the blame for the war (εἵνεκ' ἐμεῖο κυνὸς καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου ἕνεκ' ἄτης, "on my account, bitch as I am, and due to Alexander's blindness", *Il.* 6.356).[21]

In the same way that Statius' Argia finds correspondences both in Helen and Andromache, his Antigone can also be seen as a reworking of both Homeric heroines. Half-way through the poem, Antigone finds herself on "a solitary tower" (*turre ... sola*, *Theb.* 7.243) to perform a *teichoscopia* similar to that of Helen,[22] who goes "up to the tower" (ἐπὶ πύργον, *Il.* 3.154) as a result of Iris' visit

20 Thus, for instance, are the mothers of Latium described in *A.* 7.580, as they celebrate Bacchic rites with Amata; the same term forms part of a simile comparing Jocasta to a Theban Bacchant in Sen. *Oed.* 1005–1007.

21 Helen, however, allows for the role of the gods to come explicitly into the picture (οἷσιν ἐπὶ Ζεὺς θῆκε κακὸν μόρον, "as Zeus brought an evil doom upon us both", Hom. *Il.* 6.357). Dominik (1994a) 131 points out that, instead of blaming the gods, Argia thanks them for helping her find Polynices' body, yet another proof of her piety.

22 Smolenaars (1994) 120; Ganiban (2007) 166–167. *Teichoscopia* is very common in the *Iliad*; Priam and Hecuba go on the walls in Book 22 in an attempt to convince Hector not to

discussed above. Yet, Antigone's role is not to explain who the warriors are, as in the Homeric model, but to listen to her old companion pointing them out to her,[23] as the tragic tradition prescribed.[24] She "protects her tender cheeks with a veil" (*Theb.* 7.244–245), just as Helen "veiled herself with linen" (*Il.* 3.141), only in her case the veil is gleaming white (ἀργεννῇσι … ὀθόνῃσιν) whereas Antigone wears an ominous black (*atra / ueste*).

In Book 11 Antigone returns to the walls (*fastigia muri … summas … ad arces*, *Theb.* 11.356–358) to try to convince Polynices not to fight his brother in a duel. Here, however, she recalls Andromache in whose description we also note two references to the walls: ἐπὶ πύργον … μέγαν Ἰλίου (*Il.* 6.386); πρὸς τεῖχος (388). She gets there in haste (ἐπειγομένη, 388), which in Antigone's case is expressed as non-delay (*nec casta retardat / uirginitas*, "her chaste maidenhood does not delay her", *Theb.* 11.354–355).[25] Finally, the Theban princess is characterised as *furens* (357) which reproduces the Iliadic phrase applied to Andromache (μαινομένῃ εἰκυῖα, Hom. *Il.* 6.389).[26]

fight Achilles, only to witness their son's death with their own eyes. Andromache hears Hecuba's shrill cry "from the tower" (κωκυτοῦ δ' ἤκουσε καὶ οἰμωγῆς ἀπὸ πύργου, 22.447) and rushes there herself to look out from the wall (αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πύργον τε καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἷξεν ὅμιλον, / ἔστη παπτήνασ' ἐπὶ τείχεϊ, 462–463), only to confirm her fears seeing Hector's body being dragged by Achilles' chariot (464). Cassandra, on the other hand, is the first to raise the alarm after looking out from Pergamum, the Trojan citadel, and seeing Priam come back with Hector's ransomed body (Πέργαμον εἰσαναβᾶσα φίλον πατέρ' εἰσενόησεν / ἑσταότ' ἐν δίφρῳ, κήρυκά τε ἀστυβοώτην· / τὸν δ' ἄρ' ἐφ' ἡμιόνων ἴδε κείμενον ἐν λεχέεσσι, 24.700–702).

23 Phorbas in *Thebaid* 7 explains who the Theban warriors are, unlike both Helen's *teichoscopia* and the tragic precedent of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, which are concerned with the hostile army (Greeks and Argives respectively). In this respect Statius' Antigone resembles Medea in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* 6, who also listens to someone else (in that case, Juno disguised as her sister) describing the heroes on the battlefield.

24 E. *Ph.* 88–201, where the old *paedagogus* describes the Argive army to Antigone, as Smolenaars (1994) 120 points out.

25 Hershkowitz (1993) 142–143 compares Antigone's two *teichoscopia* scenes, noting that her madness in Book 11 accounts for her figurative loss of virginity.

26 Antigone's portrayal as a raging woman whose frenzy helps her go fast (*uolat*) recalls Jocasta's earlier description which compared her to the Bacchant Agave (*Theb.* 11.318–320). Then neither the attendants nor Antigone and Ismene could keep up with the queen (*Theb.* 11.321–322); here Antigone's tutor, Actor, tries to walk as fast as his mistress but ultimately fails (*non duraturus*, *Theb.* 11.358), as Ganiban (2007) 166 points out. He adds that Antigone's appeal to Polynices has no precedent in the tragic tradition, and this is proof of the Statian Antigone's appropriation of roles originally belonging to Jocasta alone.

Antigone / Argia

The use of these Homeric models, who are also sisters-in-law, evokes the Homeric lament for Hector in the final book of the *Iliad*, and foreshadows the encounter of Antigone and Argia in order to mourn Polynices in the final book of the *Thebaid*. The two women's similar portrayal in their respective *teichoscopia* scenes, which this section examines, also anticipates that encounter.

As Antigone stands on the walls of Thebes to address Polynices (*Theb.* 11.354–358), she recalls Argia who earlier stood on the walls of Argos to watch him depart (4.89–91). In both cases Polynices in the midst of his army sees and is seen by his wife and his sister who stand at the top of towers: Antigone goes *summas … ad arces* (11.358), Argia is seen *de turre suprema* (4.89). In fact, the word *turris* used to denote Argia's position in Book 4 is repeated in Antigone's own description of her position (*paulumque hanc respice turrem, / frater*, "look to this tower for a moment, brother", 11.363–364).[27] Even more importantly, Antigone uses the same verb (*respice*, 363) that earlier described Polynices looking back to see Argia on the tower of Argos (*respicit*, 4.91).[28] In other words, Antigone asks her brother to repeat his earlier action but this time to look not at his wife but at his sister.

Antigone's speech has a similar temporary effect on Polynices as the sight of Argia. The latter "draws her husband's mind and eyes, and turns sweet Thebes away from his heart" (*haec mentem oculosque reducit / coniugis et dulces auertit pectore Thebas*, 4.91–92).[29] Comparably, his sister's words calm his anger and generate feelings of regret and shame (*his paulum furor elanguescere dictis / coeperat, obstreperet quamquam atque obstaret Erinys*, "with these words [Polynices'] frenzy started to grow faint, even though the Fury was roaring and standing in his way", 11.382–383). In both cases the intervention of a third party is required to break the spell that those two women cast on Polynices. In Book 4 it is the shift of focus to bellicose Tydeus, while in Book 11 it is the sudden breaking of the gates by the Fury who forces the two brothers to face each other and engage in their fateful duel.[30]

27 Vessey (1973) 205 and n. 2 compares Argia's position *de turre suprema* with Antigone's *teichoscopia* which happens *turre … sola* (*Theb.* 7.243).

28 On "looking back" in the *Thebaid* see Pagán (2000) 439–448.

29 See Hershkowitz (1993) 129–130 on an interpretation of Polynices' desire for his natal family as sexual.

30 Vessey (1973) 273 compares Antigone's speech here to Jocasta's embassy to Polynices in Book 7 which also has a temporary effect (*Theb.* 7.536–538), but once again the intervention of a third party, there Tydeus, makes Polynices change his mind (*Theb.* 7.538–563).

As the two heroines arrive at the scene of the fratricide in the following book, further similarities emerge. Antigone is introduced as 'another Argia' when she appears on the battlefield in a pitiful state, wailing, and carrying a torch (*ecce alios gemitus aliamque ad busta ferebat / Antigone miseranda facem*, 12.349–350).[31] Only a few lines earlier, Argia was described as wailing (240) and carrying a torch (267–279), while when she recognised Polynices' clothes that she herself had woven she was "pitiful" too (*coniugis ipsa suos noscit miseranda labores*, 313). The description of Antigone's exit from Thebes also echoes Argia's earlier portrayal. Antigone's frenzy (*amens*, 354) as she "breaks out of the walls" (*erumpit muris*, 356) is compared to a lioness' (*uirginis ira leae*, 357), appropriately described "without her mother" (*sine matre*, 358), since Jocasta committed suicide in the previous book.[32] Similarly characterised by frenzy in her search for her husband's corpse, Argia is compared first to the crazy leader of the followers of Cybele (*dux uesana chori*, 226);[33] then to Ceres looking for her daughter Proserpina and wailing madly (270–275; note esp. *insanis ululatibus*, 274);[34] and finally to a frenzied woman possessed by a god (*attonitam*,[35] 278).[36]

So far we have seen that Argia and Antigone are modelled on the same Homeric precedents (who are indeed also sisters-in-law); and that both earlier in the poem and in Book 12 they are presented as sharing a number of

31 Pollmann (2004) *ad* 349–351. A closer inspection of the text, however, complicates matters. In order to point out that Antigone looks and behaves the same way as Argia, the poet opts for the term *alius-a-um* which is often used to stress the difference between two items. That was, for instance, the case in the *Aeneid* where the term accompanies the name of Achilles in order to designate Turnus who is similar but also very different from the Greek hero (*alius Latio iam partus Achilles, A.* 6.89). Thus, although the appearance of Antigone as she arrives at the scene resembles that of Argia a hundred lines earlier, the poet makes sure that there is a clear distinction between the two, at least for the time being.

32 Pollmann (2004) *ad* 356–358.

33 Pollmann (2004) *ad* 224–227 stresses the fanatic aspect of Cybele's followers and glosses over the idea of insanity carried by *uesana*.

34 Pollmann (2004) *ad* 270–277 brings parallels for the use of *insanus* to describe the effect of great grief to people.

35 This is the second occurrence of the term applied to Argia (the first one was at *Theb.* 4.90, discussed above), and it can be seen as continuing the simile that compares her to Ceres and thus reworking *mutatis mutandis* the mother's desperate search for her daughter.

36 Pollmann (2004) *ad* 278 describes Argia's actions as "verg[ing] on the subconscious or rather paranoid". I cannot understand then why she does not see the similarity with Antigone at 12.354ff. and insists instead on stressing the contrast between Antigone's frenzy and Argia's *pietas* [Pollmann (2004) *ad* 354].

traits: actions, appearance and equipment, wretchedness, frenzy. Their earlier similarities help to anticipate their encounter but, more importantly for the purpose of this paper, they bring them closer than any precedent of sisters-in-law could. Similarity is a characteristic of sisters in Latin epic, and I will spend the rest of this paper demonstrating how Argia and Antigone become just that within the lament scene.[37]

Sisters

Like Virgilian sisters Dido and Anna, and Ovidian heroines such as Procne and Philomela,[38] Statius' sister pairs exemplify a degree of unanimity and interchangeability that we do not see much in their Greek literary counterparts.[39] For example Argia and Deipyle, the daughters of Argive king Adrastus, and wives to Polynices and Tydeus respectively, are portrayed throughout the poem in terms highlighting their similarities, whether in appearance, age, modesty, beauty, or simply pace.[40] Therefore, by presenting Argia and Antigone as similar, the poet indicates that we should see them as more than just sisters-in-law.

In fact, a clearer pointer to their sisterly nature is found in their comparison within Book 12 in terms of knowledge and ignorance of the battlefield. Naturally for a Theban, Antigone knows the topography of the plain as well as the exact position of Polynices' body (*trucem campum et positus quo puluere frater / nouerat*, 359–360), perhaps because she watched the duel from the walls

37 Their adherence to this sister image is such that Argia and Antigone are sometimes described as "the sisters": Dominik (1994b) 42 n. 61; Ganiban (2007) 211.

38 Verg. *A.* 4 *passim* (Dido and Anna); Ov. *Met.* 6.424–674 (Procne and Philomela).

39 See Manioti (2012) 27–45, 45–54, and Manioti (forthcoming). On unanimity among siblings in Flavian epic see Keith (sisters) and Littlewood (brothers) in this volume.

40 ***pariter*** *pallorque ruborque / purpureas hausere genas, oculique uerentes / ad sanctum rediere patrem*, "in equal measure pallor and redness suffused their purple cheeks, and their eyes turned respectfully towards their holy father", *Theb.* 1.337–339; ***geminae*** *mihi namque, nepotum / laeta fides,* ***aequo*** *pubescunt sidere natae, / quantus honos quantusque pudor*, "for my twin daughters, a happy promise of grandsons, are growing to adulthood under an equal star, how great their honour, how great their modesty", 2.158–160; *egregiam Argian* ***nec*** *formae laude* ***secundam*** */ Deipylen*, "lovely Argia and Deipyle, equal in praise of her beauty", 2.203–204; *proxima Lernaeo Calydonidas agmine mixtas / Tydeos exsequiis trahit* ***haud cessura*** *sorori / Deipyle*, "right next to [Argia], not intending to give precedence to her sister, Deipyle drags to Tydeus' funeral Calydonian women mixed with the Lernaean group", 12.117–119. For an extensive discussion see Manioti (2012) 55–67.

where we left her in Book 11,[41] just as Helen did when Menelaus and Paris fought to settle their dispute in *Iliad* 3. Knowledge ensures a swift arrival (*nec longa morata, Theb.* 12.358). On the contrary, Argia wanders around the battlefield for hours in vain (*per campos errore fatiscere uano*, 295), as she is *rudis atque ignara locorum* ("inexperienced and ignorant of the place", 206). While *ignara* contrasts with Antigone's *nouerat* (360), the first term used to describe Argia's ignorance, *rudis*, was applied earlier in the poem to Antigone (*sic rudis Antigone, senior cui talia Phorbas*, 7.253) who at the time, and in comparison to her tutor Phorbas, was as inexperienced in war as Argia is. *rudis* was also used to describe Ismene, who during the embassy to Polynices in Book 7 was not as aware of the sorrowful situation as her sister (*rudis Ismenes … flebiliora precantis / Antigones*, 535–536). Now Ismene is no longer, because she has committed suicide after Jocasta in Book 11,[42] but we have another woman in Book 12 who juxtaposes her ignorance to Antigone's knowledge: *rudis Argia*.

Argia's role as filling in the gap left by Ismene's death is confirmed by two scenes in the lament episode which rework earlier ones in the *Thebaid* featuring Antigone and Ismene, but are ingeniously reversed. While Antigone and Ismene acted as mediators in Book 7, and told each other stories of the war in Book 8, in Book 12 Antigone and her new 'sister' Argia first become storytellers and then try to intervene between the still-warring brothers.

After the initial moments of apprehension and mistrust which follow their encounter on the Theban battlefield (on which see below), Argia and Antigone resume their lament for the dead Polynices:[43]

> … hic pariter lapsae iunctoque per ipsum
> amplexu miscent auidae lacrimasque comasque
> partitaeque artus redeunt alterna gementes
> ad uultum et cara uicibus ceruice fruuntur.
> dumque modo haec fratrem memorat nunc illa maritum
> mutuaque exorsae Thebas Argosque renarrant
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 12.385–390

41 Pollmann (2004) *ad* 360 takes this to be a certainty.

42 Implied by her comparison to Erigone (*Theb.* 11.644–647): see Hershkowitz (1993) 140, 143; Augoustakis (2010) 75; Scioli (2010) 209 n. 15.

43 The two laments for Polynices (by Argia alone earlier in Book 12, and by Argia and Antigone here) offer "a rival version of the epic Statius has just told, seen through women's eyes and in women's terms" [Fantham (1999) 231]. On the feminine end of the *Thebaid* see also Dietrich (1999).

> … here, collapsing together and joined in the same embrace around him, they greedily mix their tears and their hair, and dividing his limbs between them they return to his face alternating their wailing, and delight in his dear neck in turn. And while now one recalls her brother, now the other her husband, and they begin to tell again to each other the stories of Thebes and Argos …

The concentration of terms denoting equity (*pariter*, *partitae*), togetherness (*iuncto … amplexu*) and alternation (*alterna, uicibus*) points to Argia and Antigone's rejection of one's priority over the other and the acceptance of their bond through Polynices.[44] Their equal share further extends to their words, which they resume immediately in order to remember Polynices and retell the story of their countries and the war (389–390). Their mutual exchange of narratives (*mutua … renarrant*) is further stressed by the symmetrical structure in the first line with the singular verb (*memorat*) applying to both as it is framed by a sequence of temporal adverb, pronoun subject and noun object.

More importantly, this description recalls the scene in Book 8 where Antigone and Ismene talk about the woes of their family and the war of their brothers:[45]

> interea thalami secreta in parte sorores,
> par aliud morum miserique innoxia proles
> Oedipodae, uarias miscent sermone querellas.
> nec mala quae iuxta sed longa ab origine fati,
> haec matris taedas oculos ast illa paternos,
> altera regnantem profugum gemit altera fratrem,
> bella ambae. …
>
> Stat. *Theb*. 8.607–613

> Meanwhile in a secret part of the room the sisters, a different pair in attitude, the innocent offspring of wretched Oedipus, mix various complaints in their speech. Nor do they talk of recent evils but those from the early

44 As Lovatt (1999) 138 puts it, "mutual grief makes the women allies, and their mourning is characterised by words of sharing (*pariter*, *iuncto*, *miscent*, *partitae*, *alterna*, *uicibus*, *Theb*. 12.385–388)". These terms, according to Ganiban (2007) 211, "contribute to the inseparability of the sisters (*sic*) in their frenzied actions". On the "sexually charged picture of grief", see Hershkowitz (1998) 294 with further bibliography.

45 On this episode see also Augoustakis, Keith and Newlands in this volume.

> beginnings of their doom, this one of their mother's bridal torches, that one of their father's eyes, one wails for their reigning brother, the other for their exiled one, and both of them for the war …

Their descriptions (*sorores*, *par*, *proles*) are densely packed in one and a half lines, creating the impression of a very intimate relationship, also highlighted by the kinship terms (*mater, pater, frater*) which are valid for both. They complement each other in their narrative of the family's past misfortunes,[46] as the syntax points out (*haec … illa … / altera … altera … / … ambae*, 611–613), with the last designation, *ambae*, bringing them together as one. This arrangement paired with a balanced distribution of half a line to each one (611–612) confirms the sisters' indivisibility and identical behaviour, a trait shared with the other pair of the poem, Argia and Deipyle.[47]

The combination of the words *exorsae* and *renarrant* to describe the narrative process in Book 12 (390) echoes the sequence *exordia … adnarrant* ("they tell of the beginning", 8.618–619) applied to the Theban sisters through their comparison to nightingales. The invocation of the previous scene through these structural and verbal parallels encourages us to read this meeting as a repetition of the earlier one, but now Argia has substituted Ismene not only in the role of a narrative voice but also in the more crucial one of a sister.[48]

Later in Book 12, Argia and Antigone place Polynices' body on a still burning pyre, only to realise that it is that of Eteocles. The two brothers' duel continues after death as the flames split and seem to fight each other.[49] At that moment, Antigone tries to placate the brothers' posthumous ire, specifically addressing Polynices:[50] *cede—hoc nupta precatur / hoc soror—aut saeuos mediae ueniemus in ignes* ("yield—your wife begs for this, your sister too—

46 This scene "draws attention to the undeserved nature of their suffering", but also showcases the "virtuous qualities of womankind" as innocent victims of the war (Dominik (1994b) 126–127).

47 See above, n. 40.

48 As Steiner (1984) 146 notes, in the reception of Statius' *Thebaid* one cannot fail to notice the replacement of Ismene's character by that of Argia, and it is only in the modern period when Statius' work was eclipsed that the Theban princess reclaims her Sophoclean position.

49 On the split flame see e.g. McNelis (2007) 157–159.

50 Pollmann (2004) *ad* 444 explains this shift from both brothers to Polynices alone as a matter of affability of the latter. It is more reasonable, however, to expect Antigone to address him and not Eteocles not only because of their closer bond, but also because Argia, his wife, is present whose prayers would have no effect on Eteocles.

otherwise we will come in the middle of the savage fire", 445–446).[51] As Antigone points out, both his wife and his sister are begging Polynices to withdraw from this meaningless hatred, and once again they are given equal space in the line. But it is her threat that they fall in the flames that carries the most powerful implications in Antigone's brief speech. While the adjective *mediae* primarily indicates the movement of the two women "to the middle" of the flames, there is certainly an echo from a previous occasion when the same word was applied to Antigone and her sister Ismene. This was during Jocasta's embassy to Polynices in Book 7, where her daughters accompanied her, though they were not granted direct speech. Tydeus then pointed out that even if Eteocles were to come to the Argive camp, Jocasta, Antigone and Ismene would assume the same roles that they were playing then, namely those of mediators (*et hic genetrix eadem mediaeque sorores*, 557). Now Antigone, viewing Argia as Ismene's replacement, intends to act once again, this time *in extremis*, as a mediator in order to stop the brothers' quarrel which continues even after their mutual killing.

Rivalry

This combination of sisters-in-law and actual sisters in the presentation of Argia and Antigone may go some way towards explaining their perceived rivalry in Book 12.[52] Throughout the lament scene tension builds up and then subsides, whether it is Argia wondering where the famous Antigone is (*ubi incluta fama / Antigone?* 331–332), or their alternating claims over Polynices just before they start their mutual lament (362–385). Especially poignant in that altercation are Antigone's designation of the night as hers (*nocte mea*, 367), Argia's embrace of Polynices (*corpusque tamen complexa*, 373), and Antigone's identification of his body with her own (*mea membra tenes, mea funera plangis*, 383).[53] We have seen them act complementarily or as one, but at the end of that scene of war storytelling *longius Argia miseros reminiscitur actus* ("Argia recalls his sorrowful actions for longer", 391). A direct speech follows but when Antigone's turn comes for her reply, in fact as "she had begun to tell of the reasons and the sad

51 Gärtner (2007) sees in Antigone's threat *aut saeuos mediae ueniemus in ignes* a reworking of Julia's threat to Pompey in Lucan: *ueniam te bella gerente / in medias acies* (Luc. 3.30–31).

52 On a different interpretation of their rivalry see Newlands in this volume.

53 Bernstein (2008) 100–101 points out the brief duration of this competition, and the fact that Antigone embraces Argia's cooperative attitude.

fate" (*causas ac tristia reddere fata / coeperat*, 404–405), she is briskly cut off by Argia's "loyal companion" (*fidus comes*, 405) who urges them to get on with the burial.[54]

Alongside this narrative imbalance we should also note the possibility of jealousy behind Argia's speech. By highlighting how much Antigone was loved by Polynices,[55] and allowing only a couple of mentions to herself, she brings out their contrast even more clearly:

> '… te cupiit unam noctesque diesque locutus
> Antigonen; ego cura minor facilisque relinqui. …
> nos procul. extremas sed quis deus egit in iras?
> nil uestrae ualuere preces? tibine iste negauit
> oranti?' …
>
> STAT. *Theb.* 12.396–397, 402–404

> "… You alone he desired, and day and night he spoke of Antigone; I was a lesser care, easily left behind … I was far away. But which god drove him to the edge of anger? Did your prayers count for nothing? Did your brother refuse you when you begged him?"

Argia was "easy to leave behind" and "far away".[56] She almost accuses his sister for not being able to stop Polynices with her pleading, just as she had done before Antigone arrived at the scene (*nullasne tuorum / mouisti lacrimas? ubi mater, ubi incluta fama / Antigone?* "Did you not move any of your kinswomen to tears? Where is your mother, where the famous Antigone?" 330–332).

The tension briefly subsides in the following scene where the two join forces in order to find a pyre and offer Polynices funeral rites, and even in their

54 Argia's own lament for Polynices (before Antigone arrived) was given in direct speech at *Theb.* 12.322–348; for a stylistic analysis see Dominik (1994a) 267–268. Dietrich (1999) 47 compares Argia with Euryalus' mother, and Dietrich (2004) 10–12 discusses her modelling on Dido.

55 Foley (2005) 117 sees an example of Statius' sensitivity "to the power and importance of a female voice and perspective" in Argia's presentation of Polynices' love for Antigone as his motive behind his return to Thebes; cf. Lovatt (1999) 139 who reads this rhetorical choice as Argia's manipulation of "the story to enact the reconciliation with her new family which her husband failed to achieve through war".

56 Lovatt (1999) 139 reads Argia's speech as manipulating the truth in order to earn an ally, which is what Pollmann (2004) ad 396–397 also suggests, agreeing with Frings and Hoffmann who point out that these words do not correspond to an earlier passage and purely serve her need for Antigone's loyalty and assistance.

efforts to prevent the brothers from continuing to fight after death as discussed above. When they are arrested, however, this tension reaches a climax which is interpreted as reflecting the brothers' rivalry:[57]

> … haec fratris rapuisse haec coniugis artus
> contendunt uicibusque probant: 'ego corpus' 'ego ignes'
> 'me pietas' 'me duxit amor.' …
> nusquam illa alternis modo quae reuerentia uerbis,
> iram odiumque putes, tantus discordat utrimque
> clamor, …
>
> STAT. *Theb.* 12.457–459, 461–463

> … they contend that she snatched her brother's limbs, the other her husbands, and they offer proof in turn: "I <found> the body" "I the fire" "Piety led me" "Me love." … Nowhere was that reverence which their alternating words showed a moment ago; you would think it was anger and hatred, so great was the shouting that clashed from either side …

How are we to understand this jealousy and passionate competition between the two heroines?[58] One possibility is that they convey some of the rivalry between Homeric sisters-in-law that we have seen latent in Helen's lament for Hector. The earliest version of the nightingale's myth, also found in Homer, similarly implies a rivalry between mythical sisters-in-law:[59] in the *Odyssey* Penelope compares herself to Aedon who grieves constantly, after mistakenly killing her and Zethus' son Itylus (Hom. *Od.* 19.518–523). The scholiast, drawing on Pherecydes' account, supplies the details of the story: Aedon was jealous of Niobe, who was married to Zethus' twin brother Amphion and had six children compared to her two; Aedon meant to kill one of Niobe's sons but ended up killing her own (*ad Od.* 19.518).[60] Alongside these mythical precedents, however, we may also consider the attitudes of Argia and Antigone's Roman counterparts.

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57 E.g. Hardie (1993) 46; Lovatt (1999) 144; Ganiban (2007) 210–212; Keith (2013) 293.

58 Hershkowitz (1998) 294–296 argues that this *furor*, ultimately caused by a combination of piety and madness, is directed by each heroine against herself, rather than against her sister-in-law, as their disregard for their impending death at the hands of Creon indicates (*Theb.* 12.456–460, 679–681).

59 As Huebner (2013) 150 points out in her discussion of sisters-in-law in Roman Egypt (largely based on comparative data as papyrological evidence is lacking).

60 For a discussion of the jealousy motif in the Roman version of this myth, see Manioti (forthcoming).

We know very little about Roman sisters-in-law, who might on occasion have had to live in the same household,[61] creating opportunities for conflict.[62] Rumours of such rivalry are found in literature concerning the imperial family, the first formation of which comprised precisely of a leader, his sister and his wife. Octavia is said to have resented Livia, because Augustus' love for his nephew Marcellus shifted on the young man's death to Livia's son Tiberius (*oderat omnes matres et in Liuiam maxime furebat, quia uidebatur ad illius filium transisse sibi promissa felicitas*, "she hated all mothers, and was exceedingly furious with Livia, because the good fortune promised her seemed to have passed over to that woman's son", Sen. *Dial.* 6.2.4). Tacitus opposes the unanimity of the 'brothers' Germanicus and Drusus to all the things that the Imperial court perceived as setting them apart (*fratres egregie concordes et proximorum certaminibus inconcussi*, "the brothers were in excellent agreement, unperturbed by the rivalry of those closest to them", *Ann.* 2.43), including a comparison of their wives Agrippina and Livilla, from which the former emerged victorious thanks to her fertility and reputation (*coniunx Germanici Agrippina fecunditate ac fama Liuiam uxorem Drusi praecellebat*, ibid.); whether the two women were actively engaged in this competition, however, it is impossible to say.

Among elite families, Cicero's wife Terentia seems to have got on well (at least initially) with her sister-in-law Pomponia, wife of Cicero's brother Quintus and sister of Atticus;[63] or at least Cicero is keen for Atticus to think so (*et te et sororem tuam et matrem maxime diligit*, "she loves you and your sister and your mother very much", *Att.* 1.5 = 1.8). In another letter, Terentia invites Pomponia to celebrate the Compitalia festival, and Cicero magnanimously adds her mother to the list of guests (*et Pomponiam Terentia rogat; matrem adiungemus*, "and Terentia invites Pomponia; we shall add your mother too", 11.3 = 23.4). Alongside her husband, Terentia would have made her own contribution to

61 The extended family model (including grandparents and / or adult brothers and sisters) was not the norm, as Saller and Shaw (1984) 137 argue; see also Treggiari (1991) 410; Dixon (1992) 142, and 232 n. 42 for a couple of known exceptions in the 2nd and 1st century BC.

62 Dixon (1992) 142. In the tenth book of his 2nd century AD *Metamorphoses*, Apuleius describes a woman who, motivated by "cruel rivalry" (*saeua riualitas*, 10.24), killed her husband's sister who was living under his protection ahead of her marriage to one of his best friends, because she suspected her of being a "rival and sharer of her bed" (*aemulam tori succubamque*, ibid.). See Bradley (2012) 86–88 for a brief discussion of the episode. For conflict as a regular feature of Roman family life, see Dixon (1997).

63 Treggiari (1991) 422.

saving Quintus' marriage in her day-to-day interaction with Pomponia,[64] who became neighbours when Quintus bought a house on the Palatine next door to one of Cicero's residencies in 59 BC (II.4 = 24.7); Pomponia and her son seem to have lived in Cicero's house during the autumn of 54 BC (*Q. fr.* III.7 = 27.9). Yet, there is also evidence in the orator's correspondence of discord between the sisters-in-law; in another letter to his brother he mentions "the disagreements of our women" that he and Quintus, his nephew, discussed on a recent visit in 56 BC (*multumque is mecum sermonem habuit et perhumanum de discordiis mulierum nostrarum. quid quaeris? nihil festiuius*, "he had a long conversation with me, full of sympathy with regard to the disagreements of our women. What do you want to know? Nothing was more entertaining", II.6 = 10.2).[65]

At the same time, it is important to recall that actual epic sisters also display jealousy and are depicted in contexts of competition. Dido's words to Anna that Aeneas respected "her alone" and shared his secrets with her (*solam nam perfidus ille / te colere, arcanos etiam tibi credere sensus; / sola uiri mollis aditus et tempora noras*, *A.* 4.421–423), could be read as revealing jealousy for her sister's privileged position as Aeneas' confidante—or worse.[66] In Ovid, Aglauros' envy for her sister Herse (*Met.* 2.805–811) is a lot more explicit, though divinely inspired at the same time.[67] Further examples can be found in the *Thebaid* itself. At the double wedding of Argia and Deipyle in Book 2, the former's donning of the necklace of Harmonia outshines her sister's bridal splendour (*tunc donis Argia nitet uilisque sororis / ornatus sacro praeculta superuenit auro*, "then Argia shines with the gifts and highly ornamented with the sacred gold she surpasses her sister's cheap attire", Stat. *Theb.* 2.297–298). Later in the same

64 Treggiari (2007) 41.

65 Treggiari (2007) 82 imagines that, because of this fall-out, Terentia would have not sided with Pomponia when she threw a tantrum during one of Cicero's family's visits to Quintus' house (*Att.* V.1 = 94.3). On the conflicts between Quintus and his wife, his brother-in-law, his brother, and his son of the same name, see e.g. Dixon (1997) 154–161.

66 Barrett (1970) 24 reads *perfidus* here as implying that Dido suspects Anna of having an affair with Aeneas. Ovid's and Silius' versions of the aftermath (*Fast.* 3.543–656; Sil. 8.50–201), which presents Lavinia as jealous of Anna who is now a guest in their palace in Latium, may be inspired by these lines. There is an older version of the story, which Servius attributes to Varro, according to which Anna was Aeneas' lover (Serv. *A.* 4.682, 5.4); Casali (2014) 89 suggests that *A.* 4.421–423 may allude precisely to that version. See Dietrich (2004) 2–7, 12–13, and 16 on a discussion of Silius' episode and its models.

67 See Keith (1992) 117–134; Manioti (2012) 156–170; Manioti (forthcoming) on how this is not the case with Ovid's Procne and Philomela.

book, Deipyle's wish for Tydeus to stay at Argos is explicitly side-lined by Argia's desire for him to go as an envoy to Thebes: *iustaeque preces uicere sororis* ("the just prayers of her sister won", 374).[68]

So even in the *Thebaid* the relationship between actual sisters is not without tensions, perhaps as a result of the general mood of the poem. A similar situation is seen in tragedy which also supplies important models for the heroines' characterisation. Argia's fervent desire to partake in the burial of Polynices, which is not part of the tragic tradition as we know it, can be seen as echoing Ismene's similar wish to share if not the act, at least the consequences, whatever they may be (*δέδρακα τοὔργον, εἴπερ ἥδ' ὁμορροθεῖ / καὶ ξυμμετίσχω καὶ φέρω τῆς αἰτίας*, "I did this deed, if she also agrees, and take part with her in it, and bear responsibility", S. *Ant.* 536–537). We can then read *contendunt* at *Theb.* 12.458 as summing up the tension between Argia and Antigone in the course of the lament scene, and in this way the transferral of the rivalry from the dead brothers onto them becomes more natural if they stand in for actual sisters.

But *contendere* is also used for *amoebean* singing as Virgil's shepherds do: *alternis igitur contendere uersibus ambo / coepere* ("therefore they both began to contend with alternating lines", *Ecl.* 7.18–19). Thus, it is appropriate for Antigone and Argia's *amoebean*, contest-like, storytelling and lament which we are presented with in *Thebaid* 12.[69] Their characterisation recalls precisely Antigone and Ismene in Book 8, and even Antigone and Ismene at the end of Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* (957–974, 978–985, 989–1004), where the grieving sisters utter a long lament alternating on, or even sharing, every line. It thus offers a confirmation that what we are dealing with here is a temporary assumption by Argia of the role of Ismene, becoming Antigone's sister even for the length of the lament episode in Statius' last book.

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68 The tension between the sisters is visualised by the position of *Deipyle* at the start of line 373 and *sororis* (= Argia) at the end of line 374.

69 The *Thebaid* has already been described as structured on "the gendered *antiphony* of male heroic death and female lament" (Fantham (1999) 222; my emphasis).

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Fatal Unions: Marriage at Thebes

Carole Newlands

Illic depositis habitat Concordia telis **(Ov. *Ars* 2.463)**

Marriage is at the heart of Statius' *Thebaid*. The incestuous union of Jocasta and Oedipus produced rival sons, Eteocles and Polynices, who led Thebes into the hell of civil war, the epic's theme. At the start of Statius' epic Oedipus, contrary to Sophoclean tradition, is not in exile but is still present at Thebes, lurking in the depths of the palace to work further evil by placing a curse on his sons. Jocasta likewise is still alive and dwelling in the palace, hoping, by contrast, to reconcile her sons. Their discordant, incestuous marriage represents a symbolic, permanent stain of pollution, not just a mark of shame for past crime but a present, spreading contamination of all their children and their marital hopes. The marriage of Oedipus and Jocasta represents *discordia*, the very opposite of the Roman ideal of marriage, *concordia*.[1] This essay will examine how, in the *Thebaid*, the continuing presence of Oedipus and Jocasta at Thebes blights the exogamous marriages of their children and destroys hopes for a new future and for moving beyond the *nefas* that is Thebes. Statius' representation of marriage is influenced by elegiac models, in particular Ovid's *Heroides*, poetry par excellence of marital and relational discord, which upturned the usual elegiac hierarchy of faithless women and faithful men by representing marriage and love relationships as jeopardized by male infidelities and misguided ambitions.

Significantly, *discordia* is the term that Statius uses in the *Thebaid* to describe civil strife. Discord disrupts the brothers' original plan of alternate rule, *sociisque comes discordia regnis* ("discord, the companion of shared rule", 1.130). They were never keen on the arrangement in the first place, and thus they eagerly hurtle towards fraternal conflict, demonstrating *praeceps discordia* ("precipitate discord", 1.137).[2] The interpenetration of the language of civil war with that of marriage emphasizes the social implications of civil strife. Unlike in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, civil war in the *Thebaid* is not dramatized as a deadly rivalry between two supermen with outsize ambitions. Rather, the

1 See Treggiari (1991) 251–253. On the role of marriage in Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* see Buckley in this volume.

2 Bernstein (2015) 147. On discord among brothers in Flavian epic see Bernstein and Littlewood in this volume.

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Thebaid emphasizes the social dimensions of civil war from its origins in the incestuous marriage of Jocasta and Oedipus through the failed relationships of their children, who re-enact incestuous desire through their perverse attachment to Thebes. The malign influence of both Jocasta and Oedipus assumes moreover a cosmic dimension as Jupiter and Juno are bitterly divided over the war, *tanta … thalami Discordia sancti* ("such great discord (is) in our sacred marriage bed", 1.260).[3]

The *Thebaid* is a poem about the importance of maintaining boundaries and their wilful destruction in civil war.[4] These boundaries are not only geographical but also social, cultural, political and literary. Even before the start of the civil war, at Thebes political and familial boundaries were transgressed by the revelation of incest;[5] as we shall see, the marriages of the children of Oedipus and Jocasta tragically replay that original confusion of social and cultural norms. The thematic and symbolic importance of marriage in the poem is marked by the intrusion at virtually its centre by Hypsipyle's horrific story of marital breakdown, when the women of Lemnos assume a masculine role by taking up weapons and slaughtering their husbands in their beds (5.28–498). Marital discord is played out in gendered and generic discord as a woman's lengthy tale, augmented by a Callimachean-style aetiological narrative (5.499–6.946), delays the onward march of the Argive army to Thebes.[6] This central episode emphasizes that the collapse of marriage, normatively a powerful force of social, political and emotional cohesion, has a shock effect that reverberates throughout the family and the city state, and indeed through generations.

Marriage was an important social and political institution in Statius' Rome, central to its dynastic form of government and to the political stability of empire. Regardless of what happened behind palace doors, the ruling emperor and his wife provided citizens with an exemplary model of harmonious dedication to the family, the community, and the state, and to these ends Domitian revived Augustan marital legislation.[7] Statius' *Siluae* provide a counter-example to the *Thebaid* in that marriages in contemporary Roman society are

3 Discordia, marriage and internecine strife are linked at the start of the Lemnian narrative, when "Discordia reclines in the middle of the marriage bed" (*et medio recubat Discordia lecto*, 5.74).

4 Newlands (2012) 47–61; 73–86.

5 On the transgression of boundaries in the context of family bonds in Flavian epic see also Augoustakis in this volume.

6 See McNelis (2007) 86–93. On Statius' Hypsipyle and her family bonds see Heslin and (briefly) Stocks in this volume; on the Lemnian episode see also Augoustakis.

7 Cf. Mart. 6.7.1–2; Jones (1992) 106–107; D'Ambra (1993) 36–39.

there represented as strong and harmonious, emblematic of *concordia*. But the prospect of civil war and fear of social dissolution haunted the history of Rome in the first century CE.[8] Statius wrote the *Thebaid* only twenty years after the disastrous 'year of four emperors' when civil war was fought not on foreign fields but in the streets of Rome. The *Thebaid* demonstrates the destructive consequences of civil war for social institutions, for homes and families. Marriage at Thebes is the fount of discord; it also represents the results of discord and is thus a potent metaphor for the civic divisions and confusions that fuel the plot of the *Thebaid* at the social, political and literary levels.

In this essay I will examine in particular the role of three marriages of the Oedipan family in the *Thebaid*: first, the prospective marriage of the daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta, Ismene, to the foreigner Atys; then the marriage of their son Polynices to the Argive Argia; and finally the marriage of Jocasta and Oedipus. The representation of these marriages in the *Thebaid* is coloured by the appropriation of the elegiac paradigm of the *relicta*, the woman abandoned by a lover or husband. This generic shift reflects the instability of social and gender roles in these relationships. True, the figure of the abandoned woman goes back to the *Iliad* with Andromache taking leave of Hector (*Il.* 6.369–502).[9] But Roman poetry, beginning with Catullus 64 in particular, problematizes male departure. Whereas honour requires that Hector leave his wife and family and fight Achilles, dishonour in Catullus 64 drives Theseus away from Ariadne, the paradigm of the abandoned woman in Roman poetry; often there is an ethical dimension to her plight, particularly when marriage (or what is believed to be marriage) is involved, as is the case with Vergil's story of Dido and Aeneas in *Aeneid* 4. Ovid's elegiac *Heroides* represent the most sustained exploration of the *relicta* in Roman poetry, giving her a powerful voice that is grief-stricken but also uninterrupted by a male presence.

In Statius' unfinished epic the *Achilleid*, Achilles' departure for Troy after his refuge on Scyros has been discovered by the Greeks is presented as a political necessity but a morally troubling choice. Unlike Aeneas, Achilles is married to Deidamia, the princess who helped shelter him when he arrived on the island of Scyros, and they have a son. At the end of Book 1 and the start of Book 2 of the *Achilleid*, Deidamia plays the elegiac role of the abandoned woman as modelled in particular by the soldiers' wives Arethusa in Propertius 4.3 and Laodamia in Ovid's *Ep*. 13.[10] In her long, tearful speech to Achilles on

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8 See Newlands (2012) 2–4.

9 Lovatt (2013) 226.

10 Rosati (1992) 260–261.

their wedding night—the only night they will spend together as a married couple (*Ach.* 1.929–955)—she laments that, although their secret relationship has been finally made legitimate by marriage, he is making a swift, sudden exit, *abripitur miserae permissus Achilles* ("Achilles has been granted and snatched away from wretched me", 1.939). She applies to herself the conventional epithet of the unhappy lover, *misera*; but she ends her speech with a wife's appeal to his paternal responsibility towards their child (1.952–955).[11]

Children provide a moral bargaining chip between husbands and wives. In *Aeneid* 4 Vergil's Dido refers to her longing for a child by Aeneas (4.328–330); in Ovid's *Heroides*, where she represents herself as definitely married, the poet makes her pregnant (*Ep.* 7.133–138). Thus the Aeneas of the *Heroides* not only is abandoning to death an unhappy woman, he is also abandoning (and killing) their unborn child; his guilt is doubled. Unlike Aeneas, Statius' Achilles acknowledges his marital and paternal responsibilities and swears an oath of fidelity to Deidamia; his tears too act as a pledge of his commitment (1.956–958), while they also reflect Achilles' generic and gendered instability in this poem.

Achilles seems to revert, moreover, to the type of faithless lover established by the Theseus of Catullus 64 when that oath is undercut by the last line of Book 1, *irrita uentosae rapiebant uerba procellae* ("gusts of wind snatched away his words spoken in vain", 1.960). These words echo Catullus' ironic comment on Theseus' promises to Ariadne, *irrita uentosae linquens promissa procellae* ("abandoning his vain promises to gusts of wind", 64.59). Heslin has argued that Statius lessens Achilles' moral responsibility through a nuanced shift in syntax. 'Gusts of wind' rather than the male hero are the agent of invalidating the promises, thus suggesting that the future is out of Achilles' control; he is fated to die and will for that reason not be able to fulfil his promises.[12] However, Deidamia's concluding fears that a barbarian wife or slave woman might supplant her (1.954–955) ironically anticipate Achilles' violent passion for Briseis, the traditional focus of Achilles' erotic career; Deidamia herself is not an Iliadic character. Indeed, Deidamia echoes the fearful request of Ovid's Briseis in the *Heroides* that Achilles' new wife not be allowed to hurt her (*Ep.* 3.77–82).[13] An early death may be fated; but Achilles has a choice about his women. As Rosati argues, "Achille non è un eroe *tout court*". Rather, in the *Achilleid* the experience of love has changed him and given him a humanity

11 See Rosati (1992) 256–259; see also Bessone in this volume.

12 Heslin (2005) 144; Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) 279–280.

13 Bernstein (2008) 130–131. See also Rosati (1992) 261–264.

beyond the Iliadic, martial model.[14] Here the elegiac model of abandonment and the reminder of Achilles' future career as lover add moral and generic complexity to the epic hero's decision to go to war.

The prominent appearance of this elegiac topos at a key moment in the *Achilleid*, the end of Book 1 and the beginning of Book 2, is not surprising, given that Statius' poem engages from its inception in an extended play with the genres of elegy and epic.[15] But in the *Thebaid* Statius, as we shall see, gives the figure of the abandoned woman a distinct, unstable inflection. Husbands and wives slip among different categories of genre and gender, reinforcing the instability of the physical, social and literary world of the poem. The figure of the abandoned woman thus haunts the marriages of the family of Oedipus, not only deepening the pathos of blighted unions but also underwriting the moral inversion of marital ideals and social and cultural values under pressure of civil war.

Ismene and Atys

Ismene, daughter of Oedipus and Jocasta and sister of Antigone, is a tragic figure abandoned by her husband-to-be through his untimely death in battle. She is engaged to Atys, a young prince and a foreigner to Thebes from Cirrha (8.554–556). The story of their blighted marriage is highly dramatized at the centre of Book 8 (554–654). Here we see the death of innocence, of hopes for a 'normal' future in an exogamous marriage far from incestuous Thebes. Thebes and happy marriage are represented in this episode as tragic contradictions. Ismene undergoes a radical reworking in Statius' text. First, she is made a far more prominent figure than she is in the dramatic tradition. Secondly, as Micozzi points out, she counters the compromising rumours about her in literary tradition, namely that she had lovers before Atys. Like Ovid's maligned heroines in the *Heroides*, she 'rewrites' her biography and appears in Statius' epic as a chaste and innocent woman.[16]

Ismene appears first in the epic as a dutiful daughter, a stalwart prop to her mother when Jocasta goes out from the walls of Thebes to confront her son Polynices and attempt to dissuade him from war (7.470–483). Ismene's physical

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14 Rosati (1992) 252.

15 On the elegiac models for the parting scenes of Achilles and Deidamia, see Rosati (1992) 255–263; Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) 274–275.

16 Micozzi (2015) 331–333.

and moral support of her mother emphasizes her virtue and loyalty to Jocasta. In Book 8 Ismene and Antigone are described as *miserique innoxia proles / Oedipodae* ("innocent offspring of wretched Oedipus", 8.608–609), and yet, as the enclosing word order suggests, although 'innocent,' they will not be able to shake themselves clear of the family taint. Ismene lives unhealthily close to the source of familial crime; as always in Thebes, any apparently virtuous act, such as pious support of a mother, is double-edged. Marriage, which could offer Ismene a route away from close contact with her polluted mother to a life outside incestuous Thebes, will remain a dream.

We see Ismene through the eyes of Atys, who admires her modesty and grace in the midst of suffering she did not deserve (8.557–558). His sympathy for Ismene suggests that he is a virtuous man—the text calls him *egregius* ("outstanding", 8.559)—who misguidedly, however, believes that Ismene can be free of the taint of her parents. Already the war between the two brothers has held up their marriage (561). Atys is introduced as *coniugis ultor / infelix nondum iste suae* ("the unfortunate avenger of a wife not yet his own", 8.603–604). As Augoustakis points out, the enjambment and the delay in the crucial piece of information, that they are not yet married, points to the tragic paradox in Atys' situation; he is fighting not for Thebes but for 'a wife' who cannot yet be his and, in fact, will never be, for the reader knows that the marriage is destined never to be consummated.[17] Young and in love, Atys fights too boldly, for he wants to put on a good show for Ismene in the belief that she is watching him (561–564), and this boldness leads to his untimely death.

Atys' death is infused with sexual and nuptial symbolism.[18] First of all, he is very young, still almost a boy; his vulnerable youthfulness, and the instability of his identity, are emphasized by his name's evocation of Attis, the bisexual devotee of Cybele. He is dressed more for marriage than for war, in a thick purple cloak which his mother had woven for him; his harness, weapons, and helmet are decorated with gold (8.564–568). As the poet comments, he wrongly trusts in these flashy but flimsy accoutrements (8.569). Tydeus, who kills him easily with a light shaft in the groin, a sexualized death (8.580–586), disdains to take Atys' armour as spoils. He claims that even his wife Deipyle would not bother to toy with such worthless playthings, if she were to emerge from the bedchamber onto the battlefield (8.587–591). The beauty of Atys' armour, the erotic manner of his death, and Tydeus' references to his own marital bedchamber, make Atys' killing a grim parody of his own longed-for wedding,

17 Augoustakis (2010) 70.

18 See Scioli (2010) 202–205.

reinforcing the idea that love, innocence, and natural hopes for a united future cannot flourish on Theban soil. Tydeus' scornful attitude to Atys emphasizes the idea of Atys' sexual violation on the battlefield; in war, not in the marriage bed, he has lost his virginity, in a striking gender inversion.[19]

The tragic waste of Atys' young life and of his marriage hopes are emphasized when, dying and draped over his shield, he is brought into the women's quarters of the palace, insisting that he see Ismene one last time. In a grim parody of marriage rites, Jocasta 'shows and offers' him her modest, shy daughter (8.646–647). Ismene too performs the final act of closing her fiancé's eyes, a task, as the poet observes, normally given to a parent for one so young (8.651–653), or indeed to a spouse.[20] Though Ismene is constrained by modesty when she is brought to Atys' dying bed, once she is on her own she freely shows by her unrestrained grief that their love was mutual:

> … ibi demum teste remoto
> fassa pios gemitus lacrimasque in uulnera fudit.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 8.653–654

> There at last, when all witnesses had been removed, she confessed her devoted sorrow and poured tears upon his wounds.

Pios, a word that suggests strong family loyalty, casts Ismene in this moment of intimacy as Atys' wife, but a wife only when abandoned by death. Otherwise her piety remains directed towards her unfortunate, polluted mother.

The idea that Atys' and Ismene's marriage to one another will never be consummated is reinforced by Ismene's dream on the night before Atys' death, which Ismene recounts to her sister Antigone (8.607–635).[21] This dream, and its literary historical context, have been brilliantly analysed by Scioli.[22] The dream reflects Ismene's fears about sex on her wedding night (8.622–630) and anticipates the end of her marriage hopes with the death of Atys. For she dreams that fire disturbed their nuptials:

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19 See Scioli (2010) 214. On Statius' narratives of 'perverse defloration' see Jamset (2004).

20 On the eroticism of Atys' final moments with Ismene, and her symbolic deflowering, see Augoustakis (2010) 73–75. On the duty of a parent or spouse to attend to a relative's last moments see Treggiari (1991) 483–485.

21 On the relationship of these and other sisters in Flavian epic see Keith and Manioti in this volume; on dreams in Flavian epic see also Buckley and Keith in this volume.

22 Scioli (2010). See also Micozzi (2001–2002) on the generic and intertextual complexity of the dream.

> ... turbata repente
> omnia cernebam, subitusque intercidit ignis,
> meque sequebatur rabido clamore reposcens
> mater Atyn.
>
> Stat. *Theb*. 8.630–633

> Suddenly I saw everything in terrible upheaval, and a sudden fire split us apart, and his mother pursued me demanding back Atys with rabid shouts.

In Ismene's dream the flames of the wedding torches are suddenly transformed into the fires of destruction of her marriage. The wedding that is also a funeral is a favourite paradox of Hellenistic epigram.[23] Some of the most graphic conflations of wedding and funeral torches occur in Ovid's *Heroides* in the context of incest and of civil strife; spreading fire is an appropriate image for these particularly insidious evils.[24] In *Silu*. 1.2, Statius' *epithalamium*, Concordia is present at the joyful marriage of Stella and Violentilla with "double torch" (*gemina Concordia taeda, Silu*. 1.2.240). But in the *Thebaid*, instead of the joyful torches that should join Ismene and Atys in marriage, the fire "splits them apart" (*intercidit*), a vivid symbol of Theban discord as well as an anticipation of the flames of Atys' funeral pyre. It is also an anticipation of the split flame of the brothers' funeral pyre (12.429–432), a graphic reminder that, despite Atys' virtue, his death is intimately connected with the impious split between the two brothers. The mother-in-law's frenzied pursuit of Ismene in her dream also vividly dramatizes the tragic repercussions of this ill-omened union: another family has been destroyed, and a relationship that was meant to be protective has turned deadly.

Fire is a powerful image for the transgression of familial bonds and social *mores*. Since it brings light and warmth, it can invoke the idea of a cheerful, loving home; the light from domestic torches, for instance, pours from the Argive palace, drawing Polynices out of the cold night and storm (1.380–382). But fire can also be a destructive, dangerous force when it rages unchecked. It is an appropriate image for the Theban family, with its long history of familial crime and violation of social and cultural taboos. Ismene and Antigone blame the fated events of the past on their present misfortunes (8.607–620); the phrase, *longa ab origine fati* ("from the distant origin of fate", 8.610), echoes

23 Knox (1995) on *Ep*. 11.103.

24 See *Ep*. 11.101–104; *Ep*. 14.9–10.

the poem's opening reflection on Thebes' regressive history, *longa retro series* ("a long series (of misfortune) back", 1.7). In Ismene's dream fire not only anticipates the funeral pyres of Atys and her brothers, it is also reminiscent of the fiendish marriage torches that united Jocasta and Oedipus, mother and son, *matris taedas* (8.611). Closer to Ismene's present, fire associates Atys' death with the fires of the Furies that Oedipus' curse unleashed from Hell (1.56–87) and that the young couple, despite their innocence and love, could not escape.[25] As Ganiban comments, the opposition between *nefas* and *pietas* is central to the *Thebaid*.[26]

Argia and Polynices

Statius' Argia, wife of Polynices, usurps Antigone's prominent role in the Theban literary tradition.[27] That usurpation is shown not only on the battlefield in Book 12, when Argia arrives before Antigone to find Polynices' corpse, but in her numerous speeches within the *Thebaid*. As Dominik shows, Argia makes twelve speeches (eight in the final book), each an average of just under twelve lines, Antigone nine speeches, each an average of just over eight lines.[28] Argia's speeches range in type from appeal and soliloquy to lament; Antigone's are less varied and do not include a soliloquy. Among female characters, with the exception of Hypsipyle, Argia dominates in action and in speech. Since rhetoric in ancient culture was a male domain, such a high number of speeches suggests that Argia is a character who crosses traditional literary and gender norms. Like Jocasta, she too is a queen who emblematises the social confusion of civil war.

Argia's wedding is blighted from the start. As the wedding procession approaches the temple, a shield falls suddenly from the roof, extinguishing the wedding torches, a sign of war (2.256–261). An exogamous union should be a sign of hope, of new beginnings untrammelled by the past. But Argia, moreover, is wearing a fatal wedding gift from Polynices, the jewelled, ill-omened necklace of Cadmus' wife Harmonia, *dirumque monile* (2.266), which brought harm to every generation of owner, among them Jocasta (2.269–305). Its chain of poisonous gems and evil figures is described as a "long series of evils" (*longa … series … malorum*, 2.267) that hints at its destructive past and its continuing

25 See however Micozzi (2015) 333–336, who argues that Ismene's claims of sexual innocence in her dream are a pretence.

26 Ganiban (2007) 38.

27 On Argia and Antigone as sisters-in-law see Manioti in this volume.

28 Dominik (1994a) Appendix 3, pp. 316–317; see also 227–231.

potential to harm.[29] Statius employs synecdoche here to represent the cyclical nature of Theban history, described at the poem's beginning as *longa retro series* (*Theb.* 1.7). By wearing the necklace at her wedding, Argia symbolically bears the weight of the Theban past and its malicious present and future; she implicitly allies herself with the endless circularity of regressive Theban ills. In particular, as we shall see, she inherits Jocasta's position as a wife married to a husband who is filled with incestuous desires, for Polynices' true love remains Thebes.

Tellingly Discordia gave the finishing touches to this wedding gift with all the weight of her "right hand", *tota pressit Discordia dextra* (2.288). The use of *dextra* here is a grim inversion of the symbolism of marriage, for it evokes the *coniunctio dextrarum*, "the joining of right hands" that formalized marriage and was a sign of a couple's *concordia*; the one oppressive "right hand" of Discordia both foreshadows and determines a disastrous outcome for this wedding. Although the wedding takes place in Argos, far from Thebes, Theban malice has infiltrated the union. The wedding gift is an emblem not of marital *concordia* but of its opposite, and Argia's marriage will be plagued by the unhappiness of her husband in his longing not for his wife, but for Thebes.

True, after the wedding Argia gives the necklace away to Amphiaraus' wife Eriphyle, who covets it, such is the active evil of this ornament (2.299–305).[30] Argia plays the part of the virtuous Roman wife by doing away with luxurious ornamentation at a time of war (4.196–213). Indeed, her speech to Polynices explaining why she no longer wears the necklace evokes the arguments used at the time of the repeal of the Oppian law (195 BC), when, after the disaster of the Battle of Cannae of 216 BC, women had been required to restrict their personal adornment.[31] Lucius Valerius, speaking on behalf of repeal, argues that in times of war women set aside gold and jewellery; in times of peace and celebration they again appropriately adorn themselves:

> quid aliud in luctu quam purpuram atque aurum deponunt? quid cum eluxerunt sumunt? quid in gratulationibus supplicationibusque nisi excellentiorem ornatum adiciunt?
>
> Liv. 34.7.10

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29 On the intertextuality of the ecphrasis of the necklace see McNelis (2007) 52–70.

30 On the background to this story see Parkes (2012) on *Theb.* 4.187–213.

31 On the Greek philosophical background to the ideas underpinning the repeal of the Oppian law see Treggiari (1991) 193–197.

> What else can they do but set aside purple and gold in time of mourning? And in good times why not put these things on again? What can they contribute to times of congratulation or supplication but their shining adornment?

Thus Argia tells her husband:

> 'non haec apta mihi nitidis ornatibus,' inquit,
> 'tempora, nec miserae placeant insignia formae
> te sine'.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 4.200–202

> "These times are not suitable for my shining jewellery," she says, "and it would not please me to dress up my wretched beauty without you."

Argia echoes Valerius' sentiments, but she modulates her 'masculine' speech by adding the sentiments of an elegiac woman whose husband has departed for war: there is no pleasure in adorning herself in his absence.[32]

But Argia's virtuous intent has, as usual in the *Thebaid*, a perverted result, for Amphiaraus' wife receives the necklace only on condition that she will make her husband go to war, despite knowing that this will mean his certain death. Argia's speech is directly followed by a reference to the Fury Tisiphone, gloating over the transfer of "the fatal gold" (211), a move that will set in motion "the great seeds of crime" (212) which will extend beyond Argia's generation.[33] As well as furthering her husband's desire for an impious war, Argia's high-minded surrender of her jewellery ironically enables treachery and greed in the discordant marriage of Amphiaraus and Eriphyle. Amphiaraus, the seer, is the only one of the 'Seven against Thebes' who is known for his piety. At the end of the initial description of the fatal necklace the poet comments that Amphiaraus' impious wife deserved her subsequent suffering, but her husband and son did not:

> digna quidem: sed quid miseri decepta mariti
> arma, quid insontes nati meruere furores?
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 2.304–305

32 On the elegiac precedents for Argia's abandoning of jewellery, especially Prop. 4.3.51–52 and Ov. *Ep.* 13.31–32, see Micozzi (2007) on *Theb.* 4.200.

33 On the further criminal history of the necklace see Parkes (2012) on *Theb.* 4.212.

> She deserved what was coming for her. But what did the deceived weapons of her wretched husband deserve, what the innocent battle fervour of her son?

Unlike Eriphyle, Argia is a loyal wife. But that loyalty is perverted in her active support of her husband's desire for an impious war against his own kin.

Moreover, her husband's grief and anger at his exile create discord in her marriage. Polynices suffers like a woman in Ovid's *Heroides*, not for a wicked lover, however, but for a wicked city; he cannot escape either the taint or the allure of incest. Like an elegiac woman, Argia thus fears abandonment, but unlike an elegiac woman, she acts to prevent sudden desertion. She will not be an Ariadne or a Dido, waking up to find her beloved suddenly gone. If he has to leave her, and she cannot also go to war, she will make sure the departure is planned and that she has a hand in it. She thus incorporates heroic initiative into the paradigm of the *relicta*.

At the light of dawn, the typical time of separation for lovers, Argia accosts her restless husband:[34]

> … sed fida uias arcanaque coniunx
> senserat: utque toris primo complexa iacebat
> Aurorae pallore uirum, 'quos, callide, motus
> quamue fugam moliris?' ait. 'nil transit amantes'.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 2.332–335

> But his loyal wife had picked up on his secret longing to be away: when, in the first pale light of dawn, she lay in bed embracing her husband, she said "what movements or flight are you planning, you cunning man? Nothing escapes lovers."

The enclosing word order of line 332 suggests both the paradox of Argia's marriage, with a husband who wants to leave her in order to return to Thebes, and her control over the situation, unlike other abandoned women. Statius plays up the erotic nature of the scene, the soft light in the bedroom, the embrace of husband and wife, here called lovers, in bed. *Complexa* (333) suggests marital as well as erotic concord, an idea that is offset by her address to her husband as *callide* (334), an epithet that evokes the deceptive lover.[35] Thus, although in

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34 e.g. Ov. *Am.* 1.13; Stat. *Ach.* 1.927–930.

35 Ovid defines *amor/Amor* as *callidus* (*Am.* 1.2.6); see also McKeown (1998) on *Am.* 2.19.10.

her speech to her husband she shows her understanding of his desire to return to Thebes (2.334–352), she also ends her speech by questioning whether he has "a secret passion and the prospect of a better father-in-law at Thebes" (351–352).

Her jealous suspicion is not without basis. Polynices is a faithless lover and husband to the extent that the overpowering object of his desire is not his wife but the polluted city of Thebes, which his rival brother now rules. Thus he spends his nights restless, awash with tears, and groaning, as if he were a lover separated from his beloved, instead of a newly wedded man in bed with his loving wife (2.336–339). Like a magnet Thebes pulls him away from a new life with Argia and their young son. The similarity of his sufferings to those of a lover draws attention to his incestuous origins and his inability to break away from his family and city of birth. Separated from them, he acts like a desperate, blind lover who cannot acknowledge the faults of his beloved and is, moreover, madly jealous of the brother who now possesses her. As Hershkowitz observes, Polynices' passion for Thebes is strongly marked in the poem as incestuous.[36] As he marches off to Thebes, "he holds in his hopes and prayers the kingdom, the bosom of his mother (*matrisque sinus*), and his faithful sisters" (4.88–89). His mother Jocasta is described in sexualized terms; the bodily term *sinus* can also extend its meaning to "womb".[37] When mother and son finally meet face to face before the gates of Thebes, their encounter is also highly sexualized: *raptam lacrimis gaudentibus implet* ("he seizes his mother and fills her with joyful tears", 7.493).

The discord in the marriage of Argia and Polynices is represented in the poem by the gendered and generic inversion of their roles. In Argos, Polynices plays the passive role of the suffering elegiac lover, deprived of a cruel mistress. Unusually, it is Argia, and not Polynices, who eventually takes the step of asking her father to provide troops for her husband to go to war, so upset is she by his nightly grief (3.678–721).[38] The poem here thus anticipates her breaking of gender norms when she goes to Thebes to find her husband's body. But her motive in pleading for war shows how she shares too in her husband's delusional thinking. Unlike Antigone, who in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* urges her brother to return immediately with his army to Argos and counsels him away from his self-destructive course, καὶ μὴ σέ τ' αὑτὸν καὶ πόλιν διεργάσῃ ("do not destroy yourself and your city", 1417), Argia lacks her sister-in-law's

36 Hershkowitz (1998) 278–282.

37 Hershkowitz (1998) 278.

38 See Bessone (2002).

perceptive wisdom. In response to her earlier speech to her husband, Polynices consoled her with the prospect that one day she will be able "to see the walls of Thebes and walk as a queen through two cities" (*Theb.* 2.361–362). She cannot see how false his promise of upward mobility is, and one of her reasons for war that she gives her father is the shame cast on his grandson by exile:[39]

> … da bella, pater, generique iacentis
> aspice res humiles, atque hanc, pater, aspice prolem
> exsulis; huic olim generis pudor.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 3.696–698

> Grant war, father; look at the lowly condition of your downtrodden son-in-law, and look, father, at the child of exile; one day he will be ashamed of his birth.

Ironically, it is not the Theban connection that is the cause of shame, it is her husband's exile from Thebes, so fully has Argia absorbed Polynices' twisted thinking.

In asking for war, Argia departs strikingly from elegiac norms, for conventionally wives, such as Ovid's Laodamia at *Ep.* 13.123–136, try to deter their husbands from war. But, as Keith points out, from the moment of their wedding Argia is destined to drive her husband to war, both through the awful portent of her wedding necklace and through her direct, fatal request to her father for troops.[40] Argia adds emotional force to her 'masculine' request, however, by her performance as an elegiac woman. She approaches her father at dawn with hair streaming and torn, with tear-stained cheeks, and her baby, Adrastus' grandson, at her breast (3.680–686); she adds to the political reason for war, namely the supposed strengthening of the Argive dynasty, her personal love for her husband. As she says to her father,

> … nescis, pater optime, nescis
> quantus amor castae misero nupsisse marito.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 3.704–705

> Best of fathers, you can't know, you simply can't know the intense love of a chaste wife married to a wretched husband.

39 See Bernstein (2008) 94–95.

40 Keith (2000) 96–97.

Here Argia casts the summons to war in partly elegiac terms, as an act of *amor* for a suffering (*misero*) partner, made legitimate by her loyalty in marriage and her desire to save it. As both lover and wife, Argia adds emotional force to her plea; she also adds moral force, for it was a widely held tenet of Roman society that it was the duty of a loyal wife to help her husband.

But while Argia acts with singular gumption, her desire for war, indeed civil war, is highlighted as debased by the motives that lie behind her elegiac tears. For Ovid's Laodamia, whose husband has gone off to fight at Troy, war is a wretched business:

> sed timeo, quotiens subiit miserabile bellum;
> more niuis lacrimae sole madentis eunt.
>
> Ov. *Ep*. 13.51–52

> But I am afraid whenever wretched war comes into my thoughts; my tears flow like snow melting in the sun.

Argia however weeps *for* war. Unlike other deserted women, she actively brings about her own abandonment for the sake of false ambitions and an impious cause.

Later Argia laments on the Theban battlefield that she and Polynices were not content with an exogamous marriage and rulership of Argos:

> dicebam: 'quo tendis iter? quid sceptra negata
> poscis? habes Argos, soceri regnabis in aula:
> hic tibi longus honos, hic indiuisa potestas'.
> quid queror? ipsa dedi bellum.
>
> Stat. *Theb*. 12.333–336

> I used to say "where are you going? Why do you demand the sceptre that has been denied you? You have Argos, you will reign in the palace of your father-in-law: here you will long enjoy honour, here undivided power". Why do I complain? I myself gave you war.

So too Ovid's Dido counsels Aeneas to be happy with the opportunities in Carthage:

> hos potius populos in dotem, ambage remissa,
> accipe et aduectas Pygmalionis opes.
> Ilion in Tyriam transfer felicius urbem

> resque loco regis sceptraque sacra tene! ...
> hic pacis leges, hic locus arma capit.
>
> Ov. *Ep.* 7.149–152, 156

> Instead of beating about the bush, accept my people as a dowry and the wealth of Pygmalion that I brought with me. Make a more felicitous transfer of Troy to my Carthaginian city and hold here the state of king and the sacred sceptre! This place offers scope for the laws of peace, and for war too.

Like Dido, Argia realizes that her husband could have enjoyed in her home city the benefits of marriage along with peaceful, honourable rulership. But like Aeneas, Polynices tragically loves a city more than he does his wife. Too late, on the battlefield of Thebes Argia recognizes her responsibility in abetting her husband in his desire. The necklace of Harmonia, completed by Discordia, that she wore on her wedding day, compelled her to share her husband's fatal, obsessive desire for Thebes, to see Thebes as representing wealth and glamour and increase in status rather than as regression to an incestuous household and fratricidal strife. In a sense she again replays the role of Jocasta in sharing in her husband's incestuous desire.

Her complicity in her husband's delusion carries over to her final arrival on the battlefield of Thebes. There, having stumbled across his body, she confusedly asks him to rouse himself and lead her within the walls, showing her his father's house and thus returning Argive hospitality (12.326–328). She seems to have come to Thebes imagining that the Theban palace would be a dwelling like her own, rich, welcoming, and ruled over by the kindly, hospitable Adrastus, instead of a dark house of dreadful secrets and a vengeful father who has cursed his own sons.

Certainly in her support of her husband, even to the extent of following him to war, Argia has traits of the idealized, loyal wife of contemporary Roman tradition. By Statius' time, women held much greater authority in society than before; they could for instance own property and enjoy inheritances.[41] Women's greater economic power is on display in his *Siluae*, but always harmoniously conjoined with a husband's.[42] Statius' *Silu.* 1.2, for instance, celebrates the marriage of the poet and politician Arruntius Stella to an immensely wealthy widow, Violentilla, who possesses her own grand house; she will pass

41 See Treggiari (1991) 365–396.

42 See Bernstein (2015) 145–146.

her wealth on to their children and the lustre of her ancestry, along with his (266–267). Statius' friend on the Bay of Naples, Pollius Felix, has a wife who complements him both in Epicurean calm and also in financial acumen (*Silu.* 2.2.151–155). As Bernstein comments, while the idea that Pollius and his wife enjoy true *concordia* (*Silu.* 2.2.155) is conventional enough, the founding of marital harmony on Epicurean principles is unusual and strengthens the bonds between husband and wife.[43] Bold too here is Statius' redrawing the moral map of Campania as the site of virtue and of happy, peaceful marriage rather than of luxurious decadence.

But women were particularly admired when they used their power of wealth or of character to help their husbands when they were in desperate need. In other words, when the balance of power in the marriage shifted and wives were forced into more active roles, their selective adoption of masculine attributes in the service of their husbands was worthy of approval and praise. For instance, in *Ep.* 3.16 Pliny puts forward Arria, wife of Caecina Paetus, as a model of wifely devotion. After her husband took part in a failed conspiracy against the emperor Claudius, Arria stayed with him through terrible physical and emotional hardships, showing endurance equal to a man's. For example, when Paetus was about to be taken prisoner to Rome, Arria asked the soldiers to allow her to travel with him by ship; when they refused, she hired a small fishing boat and followed along (*Ep.* 3.16.7–9). In the end, she took the initiative in their joint suicide with the famous words, after stabbing herself, "it does not hurt, Paetus" (9–13). Arria acted in a heroic manner to comfort and support her husband in difficult circumstances; their marital *concordia* extends to their joint death. She is singled out by Pliny as an exceptional example of a wife who went to extreme measures to console her husband in suffering and death (1–2), transgressing the boundaries of her sex but, at the same time, remaining true to the ideals of loyalty and duty to her husband.

As Rosati points out, a common elegiac theme of the abandoned wife that emerges in post-Augustan epic is her desire to go to war with her husband and, concomitantly, her complaint that she has been excluded from the field of action. Propertius' Arethusa provides the elegiac model by wishing that military camps were open to women (4.3.45). In post-Augustan epic, Silius Italicus' Imilce goes further in trying to persuade her husband Hannibal that she is a worthy companion on campaign and that she should go with him over the Alps (Sil. 3.109–127).[44] Her exhortation, *crede uigori / femineo*, "trust

43 Bernstein (2015) 146.

44 See Rosati (1996) 145–150.

in feminine hardiness" (3.112–113), suggests that a woman is fully capable of endurance, although Hannibal does not concede to his wife's pleas beyond urging her to continue the war effort, should he himself die, through the education of their young son into a soldier worthy of his father (3.78–83).[45] What is novel about Argia is that she does go to war, leaving the safety of home. In this regard she resembles Pliny's heroic Arria, except that she does so on her own. She is deprived of male support, for her husband is dead and her father too is absent from Argos, fighting on the Theban battlefield. Bernstein notes that, like many of the exemplary spouses of the *Siluae*, she is praised for her extreme loyalty to Polynices.[46] Yet, as I will suggest, Argia is a product of civil war epic, not of domestic encomium, and the ambiguity in her representation in Book 12 reflects the shifting character of civil war itself.

In a much discussed and cited passage, Statius' Argia puts into action the abandoned heroine's desire to join her husband in war, even though he will not be there to welcome her:[47]

> hic non femineae subitum uirtutis amorem
> colligit Argia, sexuque inmane relicto
> tractat opus.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 12.177–179

> Then Argia gathers up a sudden love of unfeminine courage and abandoning her sex she takes on a huge task.

The language here is highly provocative. The word *amorem*, "love", is applied not to Argia's husband but to the oxymoron (*non*) *femineae … uirtutis*, "not feminine virtue". *Relinquo* and its nominal participial form *relicta* are frequently used of the 'abandoned woman'; thus in *Ep.* 7.84 Ovid's Dido describes Aeneas' first wife Creusa as *a duro sola relicta uiro*, "a woman abandoned by her hard-hearted husband"—a definition of the elegiac, abandoned woman in a nutshell. But now the participle is applied to Argia's transgression of the restrictions of her sex; in short, she abandons the role model of the elegiac woman by going not only to join her husband but to perform his burial rites.

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45 See Lovatt (2013) 257–258 on the blurring of gender boundaries between Hannibal and Imilce in this scene.

46 Bernstein (2015) 148.

47 See Lovatt (2013) 255–256.

As Keith suggests, we can read these lines from the *Thebaid* two ways, as confirming woman's essential weakness, or as hinting that ideas of female nature may not be fixed and immutable.[48] What we have seen throughout the *Thebaid* is that no boundaries are secure; both male and female categories of gender are subject to slippage, as we saw, for example, with the feminized youth Atys. As Clover observes of Northern societies, it is not so much the body but social relations and degrees of power or powerlessness that can push a person into another status.[49] Argia is a queen in a desperate situation, her husband killed in a cruel war far from Argos. Extreme circumstances call for extreme action and extreme language. By transgressing the boundaries of both gender and the elegiac genre, Argia highlights the horrors of civil war and its drastic social inversions. Note, however, that Argia does not pick up weapons to fight; she goes to Thebes unarmed on a pious mission. As Bessone argues, through her courage and piety she provides a new epic model of female heroism.[50] If Argia is unusual it is because civil war is unusual and terrible; but she is also an example of exceptional wifely loyalty and courage. The ambiguity with which she is described here is reinforced by the description of her motives as *pietas ignesque pudici* ("loyalty and the chaste fires of passion", 12.186). The paradoxical metaphor *ignesque pudici* suggests that when the category 'woman' becomes particularly mutable, as in civil war, chastity cannot guarantee that fire's destructive potential will be tempered. Thus we will see that when Argia reaches Thebes, she is drawn into conflict with her sister-in-law Antigone.

The exaggerated language of *Theb.* 12.177–179 also draws attention to Statius' rewriting of the tragic tradition whereby Antigone is the heroic example of exceptional piety. As Lovatt has shown, in the course of the *Thebaid* Antigone too casts aside the constraints of her sex and becomes a version of a Fury, far from the Sophoclean, level-headed proponent of justice.[51] But unlike Antigone, who slips out of the walls of Thebes to find her brother's body, Argia has to make a long and difficult journey to Thebes, accompanied only by a single male, elderly companion (12.228–311). Statius rewrites tradition to make Argia, a hitherto minor character in Theban literary tradition, the new hero of the Theban aftermath.[52] A woman's departure from strongly restrictive social models and the poet's departure from powerful literary models have to be marked in strongly transgressive terms. The language of slippage here between categories

48 Keith (2000) 34–35.

49 Clover (1993) 379–380.

50 See Bessone (2011) 200–223.

51 Lovatt (2006) 65–66.

52 On Argia's minor role in the tragic tradition see Micozzi (2007) on *Theb.* 4.196–198.

of masculinity and femininity, powerfulness and powerlessness, points to the generic tensions that suffuse the poetics of civil war as the text shifts among tragic, epic and elegiac models.

Argia plays the more traditional role of abandoned lover when Polynices departs for war, gazing at him from a turret in a state of deep astonishment and dismay. The departure/abandonment scene, a convention of both elegy and epic, is here adapted to marriage:[53]

> ... tamen et de turre suprema
> attonitam totoque exstantem corpore longe
> respicit Argian; haec mentem oculosque reducit
> coniugis et dulces auertit pectore Thebas.
>
> Stat. *Theb*. 4.89–92

> However he looks back from afar at Argia, standing out with her whole body from the top of a tower; she draws back the mind and eyes of her husband and turns sweet Thebes from his heart.

Argia, situated in a tower, is placed in contrast with Polynices, on the move out of Argos and away from his wife, whom he will never see again. There is similarity here with the departure of Achilles from Scyros:[54]

> turre procul summa lacrimis comitata sororum
> commissumque tenens et habentem nomina Pyrrhum
> pendebat coniunx oculisque in carbasa fixis
> ibat et ipsa freto, et puppem iam sola uidebat.
> ille quoque obliquos dilecta ad moenia uultus
> declinat uiduamque domum gemitusque relictae
> cogitat: occultus sub corde renascitur ardor
> datque locum uirtus.
>
> Stat. *Ach*. 2.23–30

> Leaning over from the top of a distant tower, accompanied by her weeping sisters and holding their pledge, the child called Pyrrhus, his wife fixed her eyes upon the sea, imagining she herself went on the waters and now only

53 See the discussion of Lovatt (2013) 225–232.

54 Hershkowitz (1998) points out an allusion also to Aeneas' departure from Dido's shores; *dulcis ... Thebas* (92) alludes to *A*. 4.281, *dulcisque ... terras*.

> she still saw the ship. He too turns his slanting gaze to the beloved walls and thinks of the widowed home and the grief of his abandoned woman; hidden ardour grows again in his heart and valour gives way.

Although the scene of the departing Achilles is more elaborate, there are key similarities with the departure scene in *Thebaid* 4. In particular, a husband, rather than a lover, leaves his wife and child; the wife is enclosed in a tower from which she strains with her body to see and still emotionally reach her husband.

The closest model for both passages is the scene in *Heroides* 13 in which Laodamia watches her husband Protesilaus depart, like Achilles, for Troy:[55]

> incubuit Boreas abreptaque uela tetendit,
> iamque meus longe Protesilaus erat.
> dum potui spectare uirum, spectare iuuabat,
> sumque tuos oculos usque secuta meis;
> ut te non poteram, poteram tua uela uidere,
> uela diu uultus detinuere meos.
>
> Ov. *Ep.* 13.15–20

> Boreas swooped down and stretched and snatched the sails, and now my Protesilaus was far away. While I could gaze upon my husband, I was happy to gaze, and I followed your eyes continuously with mine. When I could not see you, I could see your sails; for a long time your sails held my eyes.

Ovid adapts the convention of the abandoned heroine to marriage by a hint of reciprocity in the final gaze; when Laodamia follows her husband's eyes with her own (18), this suggests that he too is looking back at her.

Statius develops the notion of reciprocity in the departure scenes of both the *Achilleid* and the *Thebaid*. In the *Achilleid* four lines are given to Deidamia's gaze, and four lines to Achilles'. As Lovatt suggests, Achilles' "slanting gaze" (27) suggests the conflict in Achilles between heroism and domesticity, war and love; he is not yet fully committed to the manly, heroic model.[56] On Scyros he has become a husband and a father; the exchange of gazes between husband and wife suggests the bond between them that he has chosen to

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55 For this and other models see Rosati (1992) 260.

56 Lovatt (2013) 231–232.

rupture. Likewise in the *Thebaid* Polynices "looks back" (*respicit*) at Argia, a word that suggests not just looking backwards but the return of her gaze. In the momentary, but final connection between husband and wife, Polynices feels himself drawn away from a Thebes that is "sweet" to him; the word *dulces* is frequently used in an erotic context and emphasizes Polynices' perverse privileging of Thebes over his wife, family and new kingdom.[57] Poignantly, his last sight of Argia affords him a temporary reminder of the possibility of marital harmony and happiness away from the allure of Thebes.

Yet Argia's odd position, with her whole body reaching out from the tower, *totoque exstantem corpore* (4.90)—compare Deidamia, who gazes leaning from the *top* of the tower (*Ach.* 2.23–25)—suggests also her exceptional boldness, her willingness to risk her safety and even her life in her desire to accompany her husband to Thebes. The verb *respicit* (*Theb.* 4.90) has also been associated with Orpheus' fatal backwards look at his wife Eurydice.[58] Thus, while the verb suggests the mutual love between Argia and Polynices, it also suggests that this is their final look at one another while both are alive. Argia will in the end go to Thebes, but not in triumph as his queen, rather, as his widow. The recasting of the abandoned female figure as married not only adds to the affective nature of these scenes but also raises ethical questions of why men go to war, a question particularly pressing in Polynices' case.

The grim legacy of a Theban marriage is seen not only in Argia's discovery of her husband's dead body and not only in the split flame of the brothers' funeral pyre, but tellingly in Argia's relationship with her sister-in-law Antigone. At first they treat one another with cordiality and respect, neither claiming superior right to Polynices, but when they are captured by soldiers, their concord breaks down:

> nusquam illa alternis modo quae reuerentia uerbis,
> iram odiumque putes: tantus discordat utrimque
> clamor, et ad regem qui deprendere trahuntur.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 12.461–463

> Gone is that former respect in their verbal exchanges; you would think they felt anger and hate: so loudly they shout at one another in discord, and drag their captors to the king.

57 On Polynices' distorted focalization of Thebes as 'sweet' see Parkes (2012) on *Theb.* 4.92. On *dulcis* used in an erotic context, see for instance *dulcis amor* in Catul. 66.6, and 68.24 and 96.

58 See Micozzi (2007) on *Theb.* 4.90.

Significantly perhaps, the split between the two women occurs almost directly after they see the split flame of the brothers' pyre (12.429–432). As McNelis points out, this evidence of the brothers' undying enmity thus denies them the kind of epic resolution that is found for instance in the *Iliad* with the funerals of Patroclus and Hector.[59] Moreover, they themselves contribute to the lack of epic closure. It has not taken long before the familial discord of Thebes has absorbed Argia too, so that she now tries to outdo her sister-in-law in claiming the greater glory of having found Polynices' body; like the two brothers, the two sisters cannot share the little power they have but mimic the brothers' conflict.[60] So deranged are they that they long for a glorious death, and rather than being dragged to Creon by their captors, "they drag their captors to the king". Statius' use of the rather rare prose word *discordat* (12.462) underlines the *discordia* that has erupted between Argia and Antigone.[61] Their contention reflects here the conflict between two literary traditions, the tragic, in which Polynices' sister Antigone reigns supreme, and the epic, as determined by the *Thebaid*, that privileges the marital relationship between Polynices and his wife. Theban discord thus infiltrates Statius' poetics.

Ovid's *Heroides* offer a privileged place for female discourse and for the promotion of a female point of view. Here women can talk back to literary tradition, reshaping it through their own memories and perspectives. In her conversations with her husband and her father in Books 2 and 3 respectively, far more space is given to Argia's voice than to the men's. A significant portion of Book 12, moreover, is focussed on Argia's thoughts and feelings. As she and Antigone first share out Polynices' body and then dispute over it, they enact a significant feature of Ovid's *Heroides* as identified by Fulkerson, that is, the women in the letters "talk to one another" in recognition of their roles in literary tradition. Fulkerson argues that the women of the *Heroides* represent an authorial community; they share not only abandonment but entwined poetic affiliation.[62] This is true also of Argia and Antigone, but in Book 12, on the polluted grounds of Thebes, any possibility of positive community quickly dissolves into familial and literary discord.

59 McNelis (2007) 157–159.

60 See Hershkowitz (1998) 294–295; Ganiban (2007) 208–212; Augoustakis (2010) 80–85.

61 See OLD *discordo* 1a.

62 See e.g. Fulkerson (2005) 4–7.

Jocasta and Oedipus

At the start of the *Thebaid*, Oedipus and Jocasta are still alive and dwelling in the palace at Thebes. As Smolenaars points out, Statius follows Euripides' *Phoenissae* and Seneca's tragedy of the same name by making Jocasta live on after Oedipus' self-blinding.[63] It is a sign of the discord between husband and wife that Oedipus curses his sons with deadly hatred and strife (1.56–87), whereas Jocasta twice tries to bring about their reconciliation, first by meeting with Polynices (7.470–483) and then with Eteocles (11.315–353).

Yet both Jocasta and Oedipus are similar in their grim, wraith-like existence on the borders between life and death. Oedipus is introduced as living in self-inflicted darkness in his own personal hell, *longaque animam sub morte trahebat* ("he was dragging out his life in a long-drawn out death", 1.48). He shares a palace with a wife "haggard and unkempt with long grief" (2.440). As Dietrich points out, Jocasta is like one of the living dead.[64]

When Jocasta leaves the walls of Thebes to confront Polynices, she is described as both terrifying and pitiful:

> ecce truces oculos sordentibus obsita canis
> exsangues Iocasta genas et bracchia planctu
> nigra ferens ramumque oleae cum uelleris atri
> nexibus, Eumenidum uelut antiquissima, portis
> egreditur magna cum maiestate malorum.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 7.474–478

> Look Jocasta, her fierce eyes covered by her straggling white hair and her arms dark with beating. Bearing an olive branch entwined with black wool, she leaves the gates with the great majesty of her evils, like a most ancient Fury.

Several details suggest her physically liminal state between life and death. Her great age aside, *exsangues*, "bloodless", is an epithet commonly used of ghosts or those on the point of death.[65] Then too she is likened to the most ancient of the Furies, who dwell in the Underworld. This comparison also links her with Oedipus who sets Tisiphone, the queen Fury of Tartarus (1.85), loose on the world.

63 Smolenaars (2008).
64 Dietrich (2015).
65 *OLD* s.v. *exsanguis* 1.

Jocasta embodies both the majesty of a queen and the enormity of the evils that have befallen her; the syntactic delay of *malorum* emphasizes Jocasta's transformation from regal to polluted consort. Yet even her "great majesty" is only the semblance of power, for her attempts at reconciliation fail. Jocasta moves like a ghost through Statius' poem, as if in tacit acknowledgement that she should not, according to the dominant literary tradition, be there.

When Jocasta finally commits suicide in the *Thebaid*, it is with difficulty, for she uses a sword and is so weak and emaciated that she can barely hold it (11.634–644). In Sophoclean tradition she hangs herself on finding out the truth of her marriage. In Euripides' *Phoenissae* and Seneca's *Oedipus*, however, she uses a sword. In the *Thebaid* her discord with her husband is illustrated by his desire also for suicide in the immediately preceding scene; but he does not succeed, for all swords have been removed from his reach by Antigone (11.627–633).

Jocasta, however, usurps Oedipus' masculine prerogative for suicide by the sword. She has kept hidden a very special sword, which once belonged to her first husband, Laius:

> regina extulerat notum penetralibus ensem,
> ensem sceptriferi spolium lacrimabile Lai.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 11.635–636

> The queen had pulled out from its hiding place a famous sword, the sword that was the lamentable spoil of sceptre-bearing Laius.

As Smolenaars explains, the sword is the weapon with which Oedipus killed Laius, seizing the weapon from the king at the fatal crossroads; hence it is called "the lamentable spoil". Moreover, the epithet *notum*, "famous", also refers to the sword's family and literary history. In Seneca's *Phoenissae*, Oedipus mentions the *notum nece / ense paterna* ("the sword famous for killing a father", 106–107).[66] Smolenaars also argues that the emotional scene of Jocasta's suicide "is further charged" by verbal echoes of Dido's suicide, also by a sword.[67] In this regard Jocasta models herself particularly on Ovid's Dido of *Heroides* 7, who, unlike Vergil's Dido, draws particular attention to the fact that she chooses to die by Aeneas' sword. She writes an accusatory epitaph telling posterity that Aeneas provided the means of death as well as the cause, *praebuit Aeneas et*

66 Smolenaars (2008) 231–232.

67 Smolenaars (2008) 233.

causam mortis et ensem / ipsa sua Dido concidit usa manu ("Aeneas provided the cause of death and the sword: Dido fell by her own hand", *Ep.* 7.195–196).

Both Jocasta and Dido die a man's death, by the sword, and without assistance. The sword is not only a symbol, however, of their transgression of social *mores* as women; it signals destructive sexual potency, and thus it is appropriate that both women, so damaged by love and sex, should be pierced by the sword as they die. By inscribing Aeneas' name on her accusatory epitaph, Ovid's Dido marks him out not only as her betrayer but essentially as her murderer. Jocasta's sexualized manner of death doubles the accusation against her two husbands, Laius and Oedipus, appropriately so in a marriage where evil passes through the family line.

Ismene is present at her mother's death and dries the wound with her tears. She too then commits suicide, but by more conventional means for women, by hanging (11.644–647). Hershkowitz comments that Ismene "stagnates into oblivion" by contrast with her sister Antigone.[68] Yet from another point of view Ismene, having lost a husband, her brothers, and her mother, alone puts a decisive end to the Theban cycle of evil, but only on her part. She is honoured by her final comparison to the mythological heroine Erigone (11.644–647), who hung herself when she found her father murdered. In antiquity they constituted an ideal father-daughter pair, and Erigone was rewarded for her piety by Dionysus, who transformed her into the constellation Virgo.[69] In the *Thebaid*, Ismene stands out among the children of Jocasta and Oedipus as virtuous and loyal. Yet palace-bound and deprived of her chance of a happy marriage, she cannot in the end escape her definition as Jocasta's daughter, not Atys' wife. The union of Jocasta and Oedipus spreads its contagious evil to their children, thwarting their prospects of exogamous, happy marriage—and of a more fortunate future for Thebes.

In the *Thebaid* Oedipus is refused exile far from Thebes. He is banished by Creon instead to the battlefield, the site of civil war now piled high with the unburied dead:

> … habeant te lustra tuusque Cithaeron;
> atque haec ecce tuis tellus habitabilis umbris,
> qua bellum geminaeque iacent in sanguine gentes.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 11.752–754

68 Hershkowitz (1998) 296.

69 Cf. Hyg. *Fab.* 130; Apollod. 3.14.7; Ov. *Met.* 10.450–451.

> Let the wilds and your Cithaeron have you. And see, this earth can accommodate your shade, where the war was fought and two peoples lie in their blood.

The adjective *geminae* (754) is a reminder that this *bellum* was civil war. Thus Oedipus at the start of the epic curses *geminas … domos, quis sanguinis auctor / ipse ego* ("twin houses, of whose blood I am the origin", 1.224–225). The blood of tainted kinship is transmuted at the poem's end into the clotted blood of two great peoples, destroyed by the brothers' enmity. In the House of Mars Discordia is depicted carrying "a twin-bladed sword", *geminumque Discordia tenens ferrum* (7.50), thus reifying the close association between civil war and the incestuous marriage that produced the two warring brothers. Creon's cruel irony condemns Oedipus, with Antigone, to carry on living in a bloodied memorial to deadly discord; here the funeral pyre of Eteocles and Polynices (*rogi discordis*, 12.448) will signal the brothers' undying hatred. In contradiction to the epigraph at the start of this essay, in the *Thebaid* concord, whether marital, familial or political, is not restored when the weapons are laid down.

Conclusion

In the *Thebaid* husbands and wives assume shifting generic and gender roles. Marriage is an integral element of Statius' epic, not simply as the prime mover of the plot but as a polluted institution on which Theban discord and the poetics of civil war are tragically and variously inscribed. Jocasta perhaps describes the paradox of incestuous marriage best when, in her failed attempt to stop the war between her sons, she confesses, *nupsi equidem peperique nefas, sed diligo tales / a dolor!* ("true, in marrying I gave birth to sin, but I love you even so, alas!", 7.514–515). The epic gives cosmic scope to that original act of *nefas* as the *discordia* of the marriage of Jocasta and Oedipus is tragically played out in a socially, politically and cosmically divided world.

But the suicides of Jocasta and of Ismene are not the end of marriage in the *Thebaid*. The perversion of marital values is graphically displayed in the mourning of the heroes' wives at the poem's conclusion (12.800–804). Rightly the poet claims that he cannot continue his poem to describe the extent of the women's grief. For instance, he will pass quickly over how two of the wives mourned their hero husbands on the funeral pyre: faithful to death, Evadne, with no apparent recognition of her husband Capaneus' impiety, kills herself on the funeral pyre seeking the fatal thunderbolt in his chest (12.800–802); Tydeus' wife excuses her husband as she lies upon his lips (12.802–803): *quo*

more iacens super oscula saeui / corporis infelix excuset Tydea coniunx ("how, lying upon the lips of the cruel body, his unhappy wife forgives Tydeus"). The last time in the poem that we saw Tydeus' mouth, it was dripping with the living gore from Melanippus' head (8.760–761). With these extreme acts of physical union at the funeral pyres of their husbands, the wives display a warped form of marital devotion. Like Polynices, who is drawn back to his incestuous home, these wives cannot turn away from the allure of *nefas*. By fastening upon the bodies of their impious spouses, they repeat at the poem's end the themes of self-destructive marriages and perverse 'return'.

Yet Athens, perhaps, offers a more positive model of marriage. When Theseus enters Athens in triumph, he comes with an Amazonian bride, Hippolyta, conquered, tamed and pregnant:

> Hippolyte, iam blanda genas patiensque mariti
> foederis. hanc patriae ritus fregisse seueros
> Atthides oblique secum mirantur operto
> murmure, quod nitidi crines, quod pectora palla
> tota latent, magnis quod barbara semet Athenis
> misceat atque hosti ueniat paritura marito.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 12.534–539

> Hippolyta, now soft of cheek and tolerant of the marriage bond. The Athenian women mutter aside among themselves and wonder that she has broken the strict customs of her country, that her hair is sleek, that a cloak entirely covers her breasts, that a barbarian woman should mingle herself with Athens and come to bear a child to her enemy husband.

Like Argia, but to a greater extreme, Hippolyta as an Amazon transgressed the boundaries of gender, at least as constituted by Greco-Roman society. In Propertius 4.3, Arethusa cites Hippolyta as an example of a woman who is free to go to war:

> felix Hippolyte! nuda tulit arma papilla
>   et texit galea barbara molle caput.
> Romanis utinam patuissent castra puellis!
>
> Prop. 4.3.43–45

> Lucky Hippolyta! She carried arms with one bare breast and a barbarian helmet covered her soft head. I wish that military camps had been made open to girls!

But the fact that *Roman* camps do not allow women such liberties marks Propertius' Hippolyta here as an outsider to Roman social codes. In the *Thebaid* Hippolyta's 'taming' is demonstrated in her groomed appearance, and, in particular, in the covering of her breasts with a thick cloak so that she can no longer wield the bow. In this description of Hippolyta's arrival in Athens, we see the reversibility of the female person. Just as Argia 'ascended' to a more powerful, masculine position on the battlefield, so Hippolyta is now assimilated to the more conventional, submissive female position in the gender hierarchy; her virtues now appear to be modesty, chastity and restraint as she enters the enclosure of civilized Athens. However, when she hears the summons to war, she wants to accompany Theseus, leading her band of Amazons, but he orders her to stay and guard the future of their child (12.635–638). With a woman back firmly in her place within the city and the palace walls, civil order can be restored along with the 'natural' hierarchy of gender.[70]

And yet, how happy and strong will this marriage be when the husband is paradoxically described as *hostis*, "an enemy" (12.539), and she remains *barbara* (12.538), a barbarian despite her modest dress?[71] When Theseus' shield bears a pictorial reminder of how Ariadne, the archetype of the abandoned woman, helped him kill the Minotaur (12.674–676)? Moreover, the reader knows that the child that Hippolyta is bearing will be Hippolytus. And when he is grown, he will plunge Theseus' subsequent marriage to Phaedra into chaos, for Phaedra will fall in love with her stepson; and in ancient law a relationship between stepson and stepmother counted as incest.[72] Moreover, Theseus will kill his own son.[73] Whether we think that Theseus comes to Thebes as a heroic civilizer or as a more ambivalent character will probably continue to be vigorously debated.[74] But with the entrance of Theseus' wife Hippolyta, the text here hints that the curse of Theban marriage will continue beyond the ruins of Thebes. Statius' epic provides a sobering reflection on the tragic repercussions of dynastic, marital discord not only for families and their kingdoms but for subsequent generations and political states.

70 See Keith (2000) 99.

71 On the troubling, even sinister elements in this passage see Augoustakis (2010) 79–80.

72 Treggiari (1991) 37–39.

73 See Dominik (1994b) 94, who argues that in cursing his son, who then suffers a tragic death, Theseus resembles Oedipus; see further 92–98. Theseus too indirectly killed his father by forgetting to change his sails from black to white on his return from Crete and his slaying of the Minotaur. See Ganiban (2007) 230.

74 See now Chaudhuri (2014) 292–297.

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The Hero's Extended Family: Familial and Narrative Tensions in Statius' *Achilleid*

Federica Bessone

Family and Genre Dynamics

It is daunting for me to write about the *Achilleid* in this venue, alongside one of its subtlest interpreters, Peter Heslin, and Neil Bernstein, who devoted an excellent chapter of his book to family relations in the poem.[1] Not that there is any shortage of material to discuss: the poet who in the *Thebaid* investigated the family conflict of Oedipus' house, in the *Achilleid* explores in a lighter tone the tensions of Achilles' family, taking delight in multiplying the hero's relatives, their perspectives and roles.

In the proem, Statius plans to *ire per omnem … heroa* ("traverse the whole hero"),[2] representing Achilles not only in the entire span of his life, but in the whole complex of his personality:[3] this also means showing the hero in all the complexity of his family relationships. More than one father and a mother 'too much a mother', one foster-father and a sort of foster-brother, a feigned sister who is the hero himself in disguise, a beloved/raped/wife and a soon-to-be-abandoned son, a 'father'-in-law who at last sends Achilles to war, even the prospect of future involvements with *Tyndaris*, a *barbara coniunx*, a *captiua* ("Tyndareus' daughter", a "barbarian wife", a "captive", alluding to Helen, Medea, Briseis): familial bonds—biological and acquired, existing and prospective, actual and virtual ones—are extended in this poem, creating a complex family structure that matches the literary complexity of the epic.

This is not just a family album—and a large one, at that—: it is a dynamic representation of how contrasting family influences and experiences affect the formation of the young hero, and of the epic text. Family tensions engender narrative tensions. As a would-be son of Jupiter and a child of de facto separated parents, compromised by his "unequal birth", who is entrusted to a half-beast, sole foster-father and is then snatched from him by his mother, Statius' Achilles is disputed by competing parental and poetic projects. His divine mother

1 Cf. Heslin (2005); Bernstein (2008), ch. 4 (Statius' *Achilleid*: Nature and Nurture) 105–131.
2 Translations of the *Achilleid* are from Shackleton Bailey (2003) (with adaptations in italics).
3 Rosati (1994b) 7.

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brings him down to the comedy of deceits and the love story of the Scyros episode, while his absent father cannot assure his heroic-epic destiny, and the virile training by his preceptor, preparing him for a grand literary future, is momentarily forgotten. Different relatives try to impose different narratives on Achilles, each of them struggling to direct the poem according to her or his own poetic agenda.

So, multiple familial roles mobilize different poetic traditions and genres, spanning from comedy to erotic elegy, to heroic epic. At Lycomedes' court, disguised as Achilles' sister, the hero enters yet another familial context; this will soon become his new, short-lived extended family, thanks to a surprise wedding with the raped woman, celebrated in the presence of the child conceived through rape, with the consent of the hitherto unsuspecting father-in-law—a true family comedy. Before that, Achilles' courtship of Deidamia, and, later, the lament of the abandoned wife, contrast the erotic-elegiac to the epic côté of the hero, exploiting Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and *Heroides*.

After Scyros, the poetic balance seems soon to be redressed. Discovered by Ulysses—a father figure—,[4] and willingly restored to his epic *curriculum vitae*, the day after the marriage Achilles embarks for Aulis and Troy, apparently fulfilling the martial epic expectations placed on him as Peleus' son. However, even this posture of Achilles as a quasi-Iliadic hero is an object of irony on the narrator's part. Striving to put the Scyros episode in parentheses, this pretentious Achilles would deny family stories, sentimental ties, and poetic relations which have made him very different from a unidimensional, archaic epic hero—but the narrator deflates his claims. Even in the imminence of the Trojan War, Statius follows in the footsteps of Ovid's deviant epic—that encyclopedia of genres ironically revising epic tradition, the *Metamorphoses*.[5] Not only does Achilles' hyper-epic autobiography conflict with the signs of his elegiac nostalgia, but his very performance of the Iliadic Achilles' 'Anger' (in a simulation guided by Ulysses) is shaped by the erotic-elegiac re-interpretations of Homer—even his future at Troy promises to be different from that in the *Iliad*.

In the *Achilleid*, the many sides of Achilles, pointed out by his multiple familial—and literary—relations, oppose and relativise each other; as he presents him in his various family ties, Statius constructs a multi-layered hero, shaped by different poetic traditions. While different characters, including

4 Heslin (2005) 286–294; Bernstein (2008) 112.

5 On Statius' construction of the *Metamorphoses* as a paradigm in epic tradition that is crucial to the *Achilleid*, Rosati (1994b) 22, 26–30 and Hinds (1998) 137–143 are fundamental.

Achilles, strive to assert, or censure, a rival poetic memory, the narrator succeeds in creating a multi-dimensional hero, more complicated than his Homeric counterpart. By putting his protagonist at the centre of an 'extended family'—a complex structure of affections, and literary affiliations—Statius has transformed Achilles into the complex hero of a 'modern' epic.

I will now focus on some passages along these interpretative lines.

'Nimis o suspensa nimisque / mater'

In a recent paper, I analysed the role of the hero's mother in the *Achilleid* from a narratological and poetological point of view, and I traced the conflicting narratives of mother and son that shape the poem.[6] It is up to Thetis to set in motion the action of the *Achilleid*. Paris is coming back from Sparta with Helen, and the Trojan War is imminent; as at the beginning of the *Iliad*, but in an attempt to avoid the Iliadic future, the divine mother comes to Achilles' assistance. Thetis would like to arouse a storm against the Trojan hero, like Juno in the *Aeneid*, but she soon has to shift into an alternative plan:

> dixerat. illa graui uultum demissa repulsa,
> quae iam excire fretum et ratibus bellare parabat
> Iliacis, alios animo commenta paratus,
> tristis ad Haemonias detorquet bracchia terras
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.95–98

> He had spoken. Thetis' face fell at the heavy rebuff. She had been in train to rouse the sea and make war upon the Ilian vessels, but now her mind devised other plans. Sadly she turned her arms to Haemonia's land.

The self-reflexive sign *alios animo commenta paratus* underlines the descent from a grand-epic project to a humbler poetic plan. Instead of a goddess' action, a mother's trick: Thetis becomes *sollers pietate magistra* ("wise in love's instruction", 1.105), and thus comes down to the earthly level of her next antagonist, the "wily Ulysses" (*sollers … Ulixes*, 1.784). The deceit and disguise at Scyros: this is the mother plot that shapes the narrative at the beginning of the *Achilleid*; the desperate trick of a mother, destined to last less than a

6 Bessone (forthcoming). See now McAuley (2015), chapter 8; Ganiban (2015).

book—until Ulysses' deceit prevails over that of Thetis, allows to recognize Achilles under the feminine dress, and starts off the narrative towards the Trojan War.

At the beginning of the poem, Statius downgrades Thetis from goddess to mother. Ulysses gives a memorable definition of her role: '*nimis o suspensa nimisque / mater!*', "Too fearful she, too much a mother!" (2.37–38). The noun "mother" becomes a synonym of anxiety, and a synthesis of everything that opposes heroic honour and resists the war epos to which Achilles is destined. The role of the mother is indeed "too much" for heroic epic: an impediment to its poetic project, at least until the motherly fear comes to terms with her son's choice to die with honour—a choice that is all the more arduous, when a goddess' son has to die. In the *Achilleid*, Statius humanizes Thetis to the utmost, making a caricature of her fears, but at the same time he hints at the Homeric motif of the immortal sorrow of a deity, deepened by tragedy and by Vergil.[7] The hero's mother is depicted in a precarious balance between *pathos* and humour: a light atmosphere is created, which makes the staging of the disguise enjoyable, but does not exclude from the beginning a gloomier background, preparing the tragedy that is to come. As Deidamia warns, complaining to Achilles in their only night as a married couple: '*nec uana Thetin timuisse memento*' ("Remember, Thetis' fears were not idle", 1.941); Thetis' fears are not unfounded, and the hero will have to remember them: the Trojan future will validate the anxieties that, so far, have made his mother almost ridiculous.

Mother vs. (Father and) Foster-Father: A Conflict of Poetics

Let us see now how Statius represents the conflict of poetic interests between Thetis, Peleus, and Chiron. At the beginning of the poem we hear the outburst of a mother, who regrets the family's educational choices and foresees the resolution of her son to embrace war:

> '… iam pelago terrisque meus quaeretur Achilles,
> et uolet ipse sequi. quid enim cunabula paruo
> Pelion et torui commisimus antra magistri?

7 Vergil develops the motif in relation to Juturna, Turnus' immortal sister, whom Statius' Thetis recalls in some traits; on Juturna's tragic affiliations see Barchiesi (1978); further, Obbink (2002).

> illic, ni fallor, Lapitharum proelia ludit
> inprobus et patria iam se metitur in hasta.
> o dolor, o seri materno in corde timores!'
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.37–42

> "… soon they will be looking by land and sea for my Achilles, and himself will want to follow. For why did I trust Pelion to the child for cradle and the grim master's cave? There, if I mistake not, he plays at Lapith battles and already measures himself with his father's spear, the rogue. Ah pain, ah tremors too late in my mother's heart!"

'*Et uolet ipse sequi*' is almost a literary prophecy: Thetis echoes Nestor's words, who, in the *Iliad*, recalls how Achilles and Patroclus, warned by himself and Odysseus, had "wanted to follow" them to Troy, accompanied by their fathers' advice (ἦρχον ἐγὼ μύθοιο κελεύων ὔμμ' ἅμ' ἕπεσθαι· / σφὼ δὲ μάλ' ἠθέλετον, τὼ δ' ἄμφω πόλλ' ἐπέτελλον, "I was first to speak, and bade you follow with us; and ye were both right eager, and those twain laid on you many commands", Hom. *Il.* 11.781–782).[8]

The goddess' prevision, born of motherly intuition, is marked by the colloquial parenthesis *ni fallor*. At the same time, *ni fallor* is an Alexandrian footnote: Thetis' hypothesis on the war games of her son evokes Pindar's *Third Nemean Ode*, a fundamental model for Achilles' education by Chiron. There it is told that, in his house, Achilles "played great deeds":

> ξανθὸς δ' Ἀχιλεὺς τὰ μὲν μένων Φιλύρας ἐν δόμοις,
> παῖς ἐὼν ἄθυρε μεγάλα ἔργα
>
> Pi. *N.* 3.43–44

> But blond Achilles, when he was in Philyra's house, as a child, played great deeds

By ἄθυρε μεγάλα ἔργα, Pindar refers to hunting, a traditional preparation for war; with the analogous oxymoron *Lapitharum proelia ludit*, Thetis imagines a real war, staged as a game: the battle between Lapiths and Centaurs; an episode which would doubly excite the imagination of Achilles, pupil to a peaceful Centaur, and son of a protagonist in the Centauromachy.[9]

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8 Cf. Klodt (2009) 183 n. 9.

9 In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Achilles is the primary internal addressee of Nestor's tale of the

An absent mother suspects the dangerous games of her son and fears his father's inauspicious influence on him, fomented by his foster-father. Once the project of an epic storm has failed, Thetis thus shifts towards Chiron's cave on Mount Pelion. Here she is informed by the preceptor about her son's progress; she finds her Achilles grown up, more educated and less disciplined; she takes him back by a deceit and transports him to Scyros, determined to cross-dress him so that he can avoid going to war (1.95–241).

The encounter between the mother and the foster-father is emblematic of the family tensions at play. Chiron, traditionally an old character, is here old in an even more evident way;[10] his activities are now more peaceful than ever. The cave shows his distance from the impious bellicosity of the other Centaurs;[11] there are "no darts that have tasted human blood", nor the improper weapons used by the Centaurs against the Lapiths (their kinsmen), but only "innocent quivers and empty hides of wild beasts": the souvenirs of hunting, no more practised by the *inermis* ("unarmed") old character, who is now devoted only to medicine and music.[12] The myth of Chiron and Achilles comprises a plurality of aspects, which reflect the Centaur's hybrid nature: the ancient authors choose to emphasise, in each instance, either the civil or the savage side of the hero's education. Statius highlights in this scene—rather unexpectedly—the peaceful and civil traits of the biform creature,[13] and reserves instead the more savage, or even ferocious aspect, for the retrospective narration that Achilles will give in first person in the second book.

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battle between Lapiths and Centaurs (framed by the Caenis/Caeneus' story), featuring his father Peleus as a protagonist (Ov. *Met.* 12.210–535).

10 This is the first trait that qualifies him (*longaeuum Chirona*, "aged Chiron", *Ach.* 1.106), and it is insisted upon, as if to suggest that a phase of Achilles' life is coming to an end (cf. *erumpit siluis—dant gaudia uires—/ notaque desueto crepuit senis ungula campo*, "out of the forest he breaks (joy gives him strength) and the ancient's familiar hoof sounded on the plain it now seldom trod", 1.122–123); see also Newlands (2012) 166.

11 As a son of Philyra and Saturn, Chiron is not akin to the other Centaurs (who are sons, or nephews, of Ixion and Nephele) and he is distinguished from them for his moral qualities since Hom. *Il.* 11.832. See LIMC s.v. *Cheiron*, 237.

12 *Ach.* 1.112–118: *hic … nullos … nec … aut … sed pharetrae insontes et inania terga ferarum. / haec quoque dum uiridis; nam tunc labor unus inermi / nosse salutiferas dubiis animantibus herbas, / aut monstrare lyra ueteres heroas alumno*, "Here are no … no … nor …, but innocent quivers and empty hides of wild beasts—these too of his salad days. For at this time unarmed his only labour was to know herbs that bring health to living things in doubtful case or to limn with his lyre the heroes of old for his pupil".

13 As the ceremonious hospitality offered to the goddess, a typical *theoxenia*: see Uccellini (2012) 117–118 on ll. 119–125.

Here, Chiron's almost maternal attitude[14] enhances by contrast the distance between Achilles and Thetis, an absent mother all the time, now welcomed with affection, but put into shade by the surrogate parental figure.[15] Chiron waits for Achilles' return attending to housekeeping and quick cooking:

> et tunc uenatu rediturum in limine primo
> opperiens properatque dapes largoque serenat
> igne domum
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.119–121

> Then as usual he was waiting at the threshold for the same to return from the hunt, hastening the repast and brightening the abode with a generous fire

with the same familial care that Patroclus has for his comrade in the *Iliad*:[16]

> 'αὐτὸς ἐνὶ κλισίῃ λαρὸν παρὰ δεῖπνον ἔθηκας
> αἶψα καὶ ὀτραλέως, ὁπότε σπερχοίατ' Ἀχαιοὶ
> Τρωσὶν ἐφ' ἱπποδάμοισι φέρειν πολύδακρυν Ἄρηα.'
>
> HOM. *Il.* 19.316–318

> "thyself wast want to set forth in our hut with nimble haste a savoury meal, whenso the Achaeans made haste to bring tearful war against the horse-taming Trojans".

He welcomes his fosterling and recomposes him after the hunt, "wonders at him, spruces him up, stroking now his chest, now his strong shoulders" (*Ach.* 1.182–183), under the eyes of a mother who is excluded from the familiarity of those gestures, and is alarmed by her own joy (1.183 *angunt sua gaudia matrem*, "Her joys torture the mother"); then he comforts her in her anguish (*attonitae*,

14 See Fantham (1999) 61; Newlands (2006) 211.

15 Achilles' affection for Chiron as a true "father" (*pater*) is foregrounded by Ovid in the episode of the Centaur's death, *Fast.* 5.407–412, and is declared by Statius in *Silu.* 2.1.88–89 *tenero sic blandus Achilli / semifer Haemonium uincebat Pelea Chiron*, "So it was that kind half-beast Chiron meant more to Achilles than Haemonian Peleus"; cf. *Ach.* 1.631 and 2.102.

16 On this image of Patroclus as a care-giver, "doing for Achilles the tasks which women typically do for others, as a Homeric mother or wife would naturally do", see Mills (2000) 11.

185), giving to Achilles the tuned lyre, so that he can display the art that he has learned, and through which in the *Iliad*—as readers know—he will console his own soul for the sorrows of the war (1.186–188).[17]

This family portrait, idyllic and tense at the same time, culminates in the image of Achilles tenderly embracing his teacher in sleep, preferring the breast he is accustomed to rather than his mother's one, that is long unknown to him (*nox trahit in somnos, saxo conlabitur ingens / Centaurus blandusque umeris se innectit Achilles, / quamquam ibi fida parens, adsuetaque pectora mauult*, "Night draws to slumber. The huge Centaur collapses on stone and Achilles fondly twines himself about his shoulders, though his faithful mother is there, preferring the familiar bosom", *Ach.* 1.195–197);[18] when the boy will be snatched in sleep by his mother, the Centaur will look at them a long time from the shore, concealing his tears (1.232–236). In the *Achilleid*, Thetis has truly come "too late",[19] not only to wreck Paris' ship, but also to exert her influence on her son, regaining his trust and diverting him from the heroic destiny Chiron has prepared him for.

In this scene, the expectations about the *toruus magister* ("grim master", 1.39 cit.), aroused by Thetis' harsh definition and by the heroic-epic connotations of *toruus*,[20] are partly disavowed by the loving traits foregrounded by the narrator.[21] An entirely different atmosphere will pervade the tale told by the

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17 Cf. Hom. *Il.* 9.185–191; Hor. *Epod.* 13.8–11 and 17–18.

18 See below, last paragraph. *Adsuetaque pectora* also reminds the reader of one of the etymologies for the name of Achilles, that from privative ἀ and χεῖλος ("lip"), suggesting that the baby was never suckled by his mother ([Apollod.] 3.13.6); cf. *Ach.* 2.98–99; Uccellini (2012) on 1.197; Barchiesi (1996) 55; Heslin (2005) 175–181.

19 Cf. *Ach.* 1.42 cit. *seri*; 1.47—*sed tardum*, "—but too late"; see also Parkes (2009).

20 See Bonadeo (2011) (pp. 88–89 on the use of the epithet for Chiron, and for 'Achilles' sister' in Thetis' words to Lycomedes, 1.351).

21 Moreover, although the mother's anxiety is confirmed by Chiron's report on Achilles' recent disobedience, by the physical power of her grown-up son, by his coming with the cubs of a lioness he killed, all this is still counterbalanced by the ephebical ambiguity of his figure and the tenderness of his gestures. Even with the lion cubs Achilles does nothing but play, inciting their claws almost as Lesbia incites the sparrow's bites (1.170 *sed catulos apportat et incitat ungues*, "bringing home the cubs and provoking their claws"; Catul. 2.4 *et acris solet incitare morsus*, "and provokes you to bite sharply"); with a similar savage tenderness, Ovid's Polyphemus offers Galatea a pair of boar's cubs as *deliciae* ("delights") to play with (*ludere*), in another wild version of Catullus' *passer, deliciae meae puellae, / quicum ludere … solet* ("Sparrow, my lady's pet, with whom she often plays", Catul. 2.1–4): Ov. *Met.* 13.834–837 *inueni geminos, qui tecum ludere possint, / inter se similes, uix ut dinoscere possis, / uillosae catulos in summis montibus ursae; / inueni et dixi: 'dominae*

hero to Ulysses and Diomedes, on the ship to (Aulis and) Troy; there, an Achilles who has become a man revises his formation in a grand heroic-epic style: Chiron's education is shown in detail in its less elegant features and exaggerated in its crudeness, by a young man who constructs for himself, in the eyes of his comrades, a hero's profile.[22] I shall return later to this studied dissimilarity.

The conflict of perspectives between Chiron and Thetis engenders a contrast between poetic programs. According to Chiron's 'prophecy', Achilles' precocious force is preparing "something great":

> 'nescio quid magnum—nec me patria omina fallunt—
> uis festina parat tenuesque superuenit annos.'
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.147–148

> "His precocious force is brewing something big (my omens *as a father* do not deceive me), going beyond his scanty years".[23]

This is a great epic future, that Statius announces recalling Propertius' announcement of the *Aeneid*, "something greater than the *Iliad* is being born" (*nescioquid maius nascitur Iliade*, Prop. 2.34.66).[24] The disproportion between *nescio quid magnum* and Achilles' *tenues annos*—a striking juncture, evoking

seruabimus istos', "I found one day among the mountain peaks, / for you to play with, twins so much alike / you scarce could tell, cubs of a shaggy bear; I found them and I said 'She shall have these; / I'll keep them for my mistress for her own'" (with l. 834 cf. also Catul. 2.9). At the same time, this is an anticipatory image: it reflects Achilles' own growing ferocity (cf. the simile comparing Parthenopaeus to a lion's cub, who gets separated from his mother as soon as he sees his claws growing, *Theb.* 9.741 *toruusque nouos respexit ad ungues*, "and looked grimly at his new claws"), forebodes the hero's abandoning his mother and his cave [Mendelsohn (1990)], and perhaps also, in a reversal of roles, Achilles' suffering as a father lion for Patroclus' death in Hom. *Il.* 18.318–323 (in the *Achilleid* Patroclus is named soon after, and his destiny with him: 1.174–177).

22 Cf. Fantham (1999) 63 and 65; (2003) 118.

23 Chiron's prophetic skills appear in fact to be played down by Statius, for the sake of the narrative plot, but the problematic, ambiguous phrase *patria omina* (either "my omens as a father", or "the prophetic skills I inherited from my father" or "ancestor", namely, Kronos or Ouranos; so Shackleton Bailey (2003): "my father's omens") may allude to his traditional predicting ability. Cf. Dilke (1954), Ripoll and Soubiran (2008), and Uccellini (2012) ad loc.

24 Koster (1979) 201 n. 34; Heslin (2005) 296. See Bessone (1997) on Ov. *Ep.* 12.212 *nescioquid certe mens mea maius agit*, "my mind meditates surely something greater, I don't know what" (transl. mine), and Introduzione, pp. 32–36.

the Callimachean λεπτόν ("tenuous")[25]—confirms this metapoetic value. In Chiron's view, the hero of the *Iliad* is almost ready. The same formula, "something great", that evokes the heroic programme of Hector in the *Iliad*, or of Nisus in the *Aeneid*,[26] here takes on a programmatic role similar to that which it has in Propertius, or in the *Heroides*: the sense of a comparison, no more between minor and grand genres, but between more or less grandiose versions of the same epic genre.[27]

We do not know if Chiron's 'Iliadic' programme would ever have been fully accomplished in Statius' text (as Alan Cameron recently maintained),[28] or if, as I like to believe (with Rosati, Barchiesi, Hinds, Feeney, Heslin),[29] it would have been relativised, once for all, by Thetis' rival programme, with all its consequences. Personally, I still believe that this poetic competition could have produced an epic project, even in what followed, much closer to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* than to Homer or Vergil. But here I do not want to discuss the *Achilleid*-which-is-not-there:[30] I would rather look for more concrete arguments in the completed section, and in the transition zone between this one and the poem-which-is-not-there. I shall begin from the prologue to the Scyros episode.

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25 *Teneros*, conjectured and printed in the text by Hall (2007), is a trivialization; in *Theb.* 4.512 *tenues annos* refers to old age, another slender condition; cf. *Silu.* 5.2.13: *sed angustis animus robustior annis* ("but your spirit is sturdier than your few years").

26 Hom. *Il.* 22.304–305: "μὴ μὰν ἀσπουδί γε καὶ ἀκλειῶς ἀπολοίμην, / ἀλλὰ μέγα ῥέξας τι καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι", "Nay, but not without a struggle let me die, neither ingloriously, but in the working of some great deed for the hearing of men that are yet to be"; Verg. *A.* 9.186–187: '*aut pugnam aut aliquid iamdudum inuadere magnum / mens agitat mihi*', "Long has my heart been astir to dare battle or some great deed".

27 Also Ulysses' words to Lycomedes at 1.784–793, answering the king's (ironical) regret at not having a nephew to send to war, and addressed indirectly to Achilles in disguise, sound like a Homeric epic programme: they recall the proem to the *Odyssey* and its Latin reception, as well as Horace's definition of the epic genre (1.785–787 '*quis enim non uisere gentes / innumeras uariosque duces atque agmina regum / ardeat?*', "for who would not burn to see the countless peoples and the captains and the columns of kings?"; cf. Hom. *Od.* 1.3, Catul. 101.1, Verg. *A.* 6.692, Hor. *Ep.* 1.2.19–20, *Ars* 141–142, and 73–74), and they proclaim metapoetically the *fama* ("fame") granted by epic to the "valour" of "brave men" (cf. Hor. *Carm.* 4.9.25–30 *fortes ... uirtus*).

28 Cameron (2009) 22: "But for all the charm and wit of Book 1, overall I see no reason to believe that it was the *Metamorphoses* rather than the *Iliad* or the *Aeneid* that he was hoping to rival—as indeed the evocation of Homer in the proem implies".

29 Rosati (1994b); Barchiesi (1996); Hinds (1998) 135–144; (2000); Feeney (2004); Heslin (2005). For other views of the *Achilleid*-to-be, see Aricò (1986) 2932; Aricò (1996).

30 A recent contribution to this exercise in discussion is Ripoll (2010) § 3.

Love between Mother and Son: Obeying a Mightier God

In the disguise scene, the implicit presence of the god of Love is announced by an emphatic proemial move:

> quis deus attonitae fraudes astumque parenti
> contulit? indocilem quae mens detraxit Achillen?
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.283–284

> What deity bestowed artful trickery on the baffled mother? What mood diverted stubborn Achilles?[31]

I have analysed this passage elsewhere, pointing out the metapoetic signs which announce this erotic section of the epic as a temporary deviation in Achilles' heroic career.[32] Even before the *coup de foudre*, Thetis' invitation to the hero to yield and submit his virile pride, putting on her dress,

> 'cedamus, paulumque animos submitte uiriles
> atque habitus dignare meos'
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.259–260

> "Let us give way. Lower a little your manly spirit and deign to wear my raiment"

is almost an invitation to minor poetry, more specifically to erotic poetry: *cedamus* recalls Gallus' elegiac programme in the tenth *Eclogue*; *summitte animos* reminds of Dido's submission to l/Love; and the adverbs *paulum*, *parumper* resemble the brief pauses from heroic epic called for by Statius in the *Siluae*.[33]

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31 See Shackleton Bailey (2003) ad loc. (n. 43 p. 335): "*Mens* seems best taken of Achilles' mood rather than as 'device', a very rare if not unexampled sense. Besides, Achilles' sight of Deidamia was not a device; it happened".

32 Cf. above, n. 6.

33 Verg. *Ecl.* 10.69: *omnia uincit Amor, et nos cedamus Amori!*, "Love conquers all; let us, too, yield to Love!"; *A.* 4.412–415: *improbe Amor, quid non mortalia pectora cogis! / ire iterum in lacrimas, iterum temptare precando / cogitur et supplex animos submittere amori, / ne quid inexpertum frustra moritura relinquat*, "Oh relentless Love, to what do you not drive the hearts of men. Once more she must needs break into tears, once more assail him with prayer, and humbly bow down her pride to love, lest she leave anything untried and go to death in vain." For *paulum, parumper* cf. *Ach.* 1.270–271: '*cape tuta parumper / tegmina nil*

The hero who is by definition "incapable of yielding" (*grauem / Pelidae stomachum cedere nescii*, "the deadly rancour of Peleus' son who was incapable of giving way", Hor. *Carm.* 1.6.5–6) can "yield" only to l/Love: the deceit (*fraudes astumque*) already plotted by Thetis could not be fulfilled in the narrative plot without the contribution (*contulit*) of a superior force. With ironic discretion, Statius stages in the epic tale the triumph of Love on Achilles, as decreed by erotic-elegiac poetry.

Re-inscribing into epic a chapter of Achilles' biography that has been written (among others) by the elegiac poets, Statius rewrites a piece of literary history. A part of the ancient tradition, including some Homeric scholia, and perhaps the text of the *Iliad* itself, censures the episode of the disguise at Scyros as indecorous and injurious to Achilles' dignity; another part of the tradition, favourable to the hero, exploits as sole justification for the episode the argument of Achilles' obedience to his mother (Fantuzzi shows this in his recent *Achilles in Love*).[34] Statius follows a different path, perhaps anticipated by Euripides: in the *Achilleid* there is no obedience to the mother, on the contrary;[35] Thetis' weakness, even towards her rebellious son, here drives the poem to a critical point. The goddess assures her son that "Chiron shall not know of *that*" (*nesciet hoc Chiron*, 1.274),[36] but Achilles resists, embodying in himself his father, his foster-father, and his own character: the whole male line of the family, with its heroic ethos,

nocitura animo', "for a little while take safe clothing, that will do no harm to your spirit"; *Silu.* 1.5.8–9: *paulum arma nocentia, Thebae / ponite: dilecto uolo lasciuire sodali*, "Thebes, lay your guilty arms aside for a while. I would frolic for a dear friend"; 4.7.5–6: *tuque regnator lyricae cohortis / da noui paulum mihi iura plectri, / si tuas cantu Latio sacraui, / Pindare, Thebas*, "and you, Pindar, ruler of the lyric band, grant me for a little while the right to change my quill, if I have hallowed your Thebes in Latian song". See also the proem, *Ach.* 1.17–19: *da ueniam ac trepidum patere hoc sudare parumper / puluere. te longo necdum fidente paratu / molimur magnusque tibi praeludit Achilles*, "give me good leave; suffer me in my eagerness to sweat awhile in this dust. On you I work in long and not yet confident preparing, and great Achilles is your prelude".

34 Fantuzzi (2012) ch. 2 (Deidameia). So Ovid in the *Ars amatoria*, in an ironic mood: *turpe, nisi hoc matris precibus tribuisset, Achilles / ueste uirum longa dissimulatus erat*, "Basely, had he not so far yielded to his mother's prayers, Achilles had disguised his manhood in a woman's robe", *Ars* 1.689–690 (cf. Fantuzzi (2012) 69).

35 In this at least, Statius keeps coherence in the construction of a hero who is by definition disobedient and rebellious (cf. Hor. *Ars* 120–122). On character consistency in Achilles, as regarded by Horace, Ovid and Statius, see now Kozák (2014).

36 For the phrase as a prologue to a deceit cf. e.g. Ov. *Met.* 2.423 (Jupiter): *'hoc certe furtum coniunx mea nesciet' inquit*, " 'this prank', he thought, 'my wife will never learn' ".

> ... sic horrida pectora tractat
> nequiquam mulcens; obstat genitorque roganti
> nutritorque ingens et cruda exordia magnae
> indolis
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.274–277

> So she wrought on his rough heart, coaxing in vain. Against her plea stands his father and his huge foster sire and the raw rudiments of a great nature.

Only the intervention of l/Love makes the fulfilment of the mother's plot possible. To create a transvestite Achilles, in Statius, the narrative alliance between the divine mother and a mightier god is needed: having fallen in love at first sight with Deidamia, the hero accepts at last the feminine dress only with a view to an erotic assertion of his virility.

The experience of *eros* constitutes in Statius the true motive of the stop at Scyros—and its lasting result. The course of the *Achilleid* could have confirmed what Latin erotic poetry theorises: that the greatest of heroes can be at the same time a warrior-lover, and a lover-warrior.[37] The episode at Lycomedes' court is a deviation in Achilles' heroic-epic career, essential to his becoming a more complex figure than the Homeric champion.[38] Thetis has not been able to alter her son's destiny, but she has successfully altered the tradition of ancient epic. From an existential and poetical point of view, Scyros will be a deviation without return.

Thetis vs. Chiron: The Re-education of Achilles

It has been suggested that, in the absence of the father, Thetis usurps the paternal role in Achilles' life.[39] We could also say that, exploiting the opportunity offered by the disguise, Thetis appropriates the crucial role of the mother in the education of a daughter (which comprises the attention to *cultus* and culminates in preparation for a wedding).[40] The way in which the goddess transforms

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37 Cf. e.g. Ov. *Ars* 1.699–700 (warrior-lover); *Am.* 1.9.33–34—an *exemplum* ironically deconstructing itself—and Prop. 2.22.29–30 (lover-warrior).

38 See also, from a gender perspective focused on the construction of epic masculinity, McAuley (2010) esp. 56–57.

39 Heslin (2005) 125–129; 292.

40 The care for a daughter's *cultus*, especially in view of her marriage, is a mother's main duty;

Achilles is a sort of re-education in the feminine, directly opposing Chiron's education; it requires the active cooperation of the learner, and will have to be continued by the new surrogate father: king Lycomedes, a father of daughters, an anti-Chiron. In Thetis' treatment of her son, described in more than twenty lines (1.325–348), different metaphorical suggestions merge, such as the manipulation of a baby's body or the moulding of a work of art, a true metamorphosis, or the modelling work of education. And it is as if Statius has compressed in a few instants different phases of the formation of a human being, from early infancy to youth.[41]

Many signs suggest that the transformation of Achilles is to be imagined at first as a sort of re-birth, a new bringing into the world: the simile comparing Thetis to the mother bird close to procreation (*qualis uicino uolucris iam sedula partu*, "Even so a bird, near to giving birth, already careful", 1.212); the sleep of Achilles as a *puer* (*toto resolutum pectore Achillen, / qui pueris sopor*, "Achilles, his bosom all relaxed in the sleep of boyhood", 1.228–229); his waking up in a different world, initially described as a new coming to the world (*cum pueri tremefacta quies oculique patentes / infusum sensere diem. stupet aere primo*, "when the boy's sleep was shaken and his wide eyes felt daylight pouring in. At first sight of sky he was stunned", 1.247–248);[42] his difficulty in "recognising the mother" (*dubitatque agnoscere matrem*, "and he doubts to recognize his mother", 1.250) as wished to the baby of the fourth *Eclogue* (*incipe, parue puer, risu cognoscere matrem*, "Begin, baby boy, to recognize your mother with a smile", Verg. *Ecl.* 4.60);[43] the image that Thetis gives of herself as *puerpera* ('*magnique puerpera caeli*', "of the great heaven should I have borne my child", 1.254–255);[44] lastly the comparison of Scyros to Delos, that hosted Latona's delivery, and to Crete, that hid the newborn Jupiter (1.384–388).

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cf. Ov. *Ep.* 8.95–96 (Hermione addressing Helen): *non cultus tibi cura mei, nec pacta marito / intraui thalamos matre parante nouos*, "I was not reared and cared for by your hand; and when I was promised in wedlock I had no mother to make ready the new chamber for my coming".

41 See also Bernstein (2008) 124–125.

42 Dante explicitly recalls this moment of the *Achilleid* in a comparison that marks his passage, as pilgrim and poet, to the proper Purgatory—a dramatic change of place which is soon after signalled as being also a poetic change (in that case, a passage to higher poetry): Dante, *Purg.* 9.34–42; 55–57; 70–72.

43 See Barchiesi (2005) 53.

44 McNelis (2009) 245, observes that "Thetis' use of *puerpera*, an exceedingly rare word in epic, certainly recalls Ovid's Latona (*Met.* 6.337)".

The wax to which Statius compares Achilles, finally yielding to Thetis' hands,

> qualiter artifici uicturae pollice cerae
> accipiunt formas ignemque manumque sequuntur,
> talis erat diuae natum mutantis imago
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.332–334

> As wax that an artist's thumb will bring to life receives shape and follows fire and hand, such was the semblance of the goddess as she transformed her son

is not only the material whereof the *imagines* of the ancestors are made:[45] it is also, in a metaphor found in Plato and Galen, the tender body of the newborn, which the mother and the nurse shape in the first years of life (Pl. *Lg.* 7.789 e; Gal. *de temperamentis* 2.2), as well as, in a common image for education, a young mind moulded by a teacher.[46] Thetis, the goddess with metamorphic abilities, which she earlier exploited in the *Metamorphoses* to escape Peleus,[47] and here she uses to transform their son (1.334 cit.), is at the same time the author of an artistic mimesis, a simulation where *ars … latet arte sua* ("such art this art conceals"):[48] she is a new Pygmalion, who—with the aid of a goddess—

45 So Dilke (1954) 332 *cerae*, Heslin (2005) 129.

46 On the mother and nurse shaping the body of the newborn, cf. Holman (1997) 80–81; Pl. *Lg.* 7.789e: βούλεσθε ἅμα γέλωτι φράζωμεν, τιθέντες νόμους τὴν μὲν κύουσαν περιπατεῖν, τὸ γενόμενον δὲ πλάττειν τε οἷον κήρινον, ἕως ὑγρόν, καὶ μέχρι δυοῖν ἐτοῖν σπαργανᾶν; "Shall we risk the ridicule, and lay down a law that the pregnant woman shall walk, and that the child, while still soft, shall be molded like wax, and be kept in swaddling clothes till it is two years old?"; Gal. *Mixt.* 2.2 (1.578.10 k.): ἀλλ' ὅμως καὶ ταῦτα καὶ ὅλα σὺν αὐτοῖς τὰ κῶλα διαπλάττουσιν αἱ τροφοὶ τῶν βρεφῶν ὥσπερ κήρινα. τοσαύτη τις ὑγρότης ἐστὶν ἐν ἅπαντι τῷ σώματι τῶν βρεφῶν, "These bones, and with them the limbs as a whole, are then moulded by the infant's nurses, in the manner of wax objects. Such, then, is the degree of moisture that exists throughout the body of the infant". On the teacher moulding the mind of the student, see Uccellini (2012) on ll. 332–334 *pollice cera*, quoting Pers. 5.40 and Juv. 7.237–238 [already referred to by Barth (1664)].

47 Ov. *Met.* 11.229–265. The juncture *tenui … discrimine*, "in narrow divide" (*Ach.* 1.337), besides alluding to Hor. *Carm.* 2.5.21–24 [Hinds (1998) 135–136], recalls the language of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*; cf. *Met.* 10.242: *paruo … discrimine uersae*, "they turned with little change".

48 Ov. *Met.* 10.252 (cf. *simulati … corporis*, 10.253); with *latet* cf. *Ach.* 1.336–337 *fallitque tuentes / ambiguus tenuique latens discrimine sexus*, "and doubtful sex cheats the observer, hiding in narrow divide". An artful simulation and deceit that Achilles must continue: *Ach.* 1.319

makes the virgin who is his work of art literally live (and dresses it, decorates it with jewels, continually retouches it);[49] and, like Pygmalion-the-Ovidian-artist (and beyond him), in this turning point of the narrative she reflects the poetics of a changing epos, varying in tone and generic register, perpetually changing—the *Achilleid* like the *Metamorphoses*.

Ovid is at the forefront of Statius' thoughts, and not only on account of the *Metamorphoses*. As has been noted by others, we do not have any Latin texts on the education of girls. We can, however, observe that for the education of Achilles' presumed sister, Thetis follows the third book of the *Ars amatoria* as a textbook (on his own, Achilles will then study volumes I and II, reserved for men). The re-education of Achilles is not only, as Barchiesi and Heslin have shown, the inverse application of the precepts of male education directed against effeminacy:[50] it is also, on a positive level, an extreme application of the Ovidian principle of *cultus*, the art of cultivating oneself, that can render seductive even girls who are not beautiful by nature—or even a feigned girl.

Cultural construction and simulation: this is the teaching that the *Ars* transmits to Achilles, and makes him credible as a woman, and effective as a man—a bivalent lesson for an ambiguous being. I will not dwell here on the well-known contacts with Ovid's text, or on all those that could be added, but I observe that the *Ars* continues to act as a model, in various senses, also after Thetis has left Scyros, and even when Ulysses comes there: though unintentionally, Achilles conceals to the hero's view the signs of his defective womanliness by coming

'*simulare choros*' ("to feign to dance"); 340 '*comitesque modis imitabere fictis*' ("you will copy your companions in fashions feigned").

49 On the wax simile in Ovid, for the metamorphosis from statue to woman effected by the goddess Venus—prolonging as it were Pygmalion's artistry (*Met.* 10.283–286)—, see Hinds (1998) 139; Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) and Uccellini (2012) on ll. 332–334; Newlands (2012) 96–97. Cf. moreover 1.326 *iniecitque sinus* ("throws the folds over him") and 329 *ac sua dilecta ceruice monilia transfert* ("and transfers her necklace to the beloved neck") with Ov. *Met.* 10.263–264 *ornat quoque uestibus artus; / dat digitis gemmas, dat longa monilia collo*, "he decks her limbs with robes and on her fingers / sets splendid rings, a necklace round her neck". Even Thetis' repeatedly advising and retouching Achilles in 1.338 *iterumque monens iterumque fatigans*, "caution*ing* and press*ing*, over and over again", and 343 *admoto non cessat comere tactu*, "nor ceases her trimming and touching" (cf. Ov. *Ars* 3.134), recalls Pygmalion's repeatedly touching his statue, where a lover's gesture merges with the final touch of an artist: *Met.* 10.254 *saepe manus operi temptantes admouet*, "with many a touch he tries it"; 282 *admouet os iterum, manibus quoque pectora temptat*, "again he kissed her and with marvelling touch caressed her breast"; 288 *rursus amans rursusque manu sua uota retractat*, "again and yet again he tried his hopes".

50 Barchiesi (2005) 54–57; Heslin (2005) 126–127.

to the banquet late, in the dark, at the light of the oil lamps, and lying down immediately—just the setting that Ovid recommended to girls for concealing their defects, and against which he advised men for judging their beauty.[51]

Thetis then would like to reproduce Achilles' education in reverse: and, as she once entrusted him to Chiron, now she entrusts him to Lycomedes, so that in his thiasus he can make him a perfect girl, ready for the wedding. Paradoxically, Lycomedes is instead destined to play the most traditional fatherly role in Achilles' life: that of "sending" a son to war (*mittis*, "you send", 1.894, to be compared with πέμπειν and sim. in the *Iliad*).[52] Achilles will express the sincerest gratitude for this to the peaceful king, calling him "father", almost in the

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51 Stat. *Ach.* 1.761–763 *tum uero intentus uultus ac pectora Ulixes / perlibrat uisu, sed **nox** inlataque **fallunt** / **lumina** et extemplo latuit **mensura iacentum***, "Then indeed Ulysses gazes intently, gauging faces and figures; but night and the lamps that are brought in deceive him, and as soon as they lie down their measurements are concealed"; cf. Ov. *Ars* 3.749–754 *sollicite expectas, dum te in conuiuia ducam, / et quaeris monitus hac quoque parte meos. / sera ueni positaque decens incede **lucerna**: / grata mora uenies, maxima lena mora est. / etsi turpis eris, formosa uidebere potis, / et latebras uitiis **nox** dabit ipsa tuis*, "Anxiously are you expecting me to lead you to the feast; here too do you await my counsels. Come late, and make a grateful entrance when the lamp has been set: delay will enhance your charm: a great procuress is delay. Though plain, to the tipsy you will seem fair: and night herself will hide your faults"; moreover, *Ars* 1.245–246 and 249–250 *hic tu **fallaci** nimium ne crede **lucernae**: / iudicio formae **noxque** merumque nocent … **nocte** latent mendae uitioque ignoscitur omni, / horaque formosam quamlibet illa facit*, "Trust not at such a time o'ermuch to the treacherous lamp; drunkness and drink impair your judgement on beauty … By night are blemishes hid, and every fault is forgiven: that hour makes any woman fair"; and, lastly, *Ars* 3.261–266 *rara tamen menda facies caret: occule mendas, / quaque potes, uitium corporis abde tui. / si breuis es, sedeas, ne stans uideare sedere, / inque tuo iaceas quantulacumque toro; / hic quoque, ne possit fieri **mensura cubantis**, / iniecta lateant fac tibi ueste pedes*, "Yet rare is the face that lacks a blemish: hide your blemishes, and as far as you can conceal any fault of body. Sit if you are short, lest standing you seem to be sitting, and recline, small as you are, on your coach; here too, lest your measure be taken as you lie, let your feet be hidden by a robe thrown across them". Cf. also the ironical contact between *Ach.* 1.767–769 *quid nisi praecipitem blando complexa moneret / Deidamia sinu nudataque pectora semper / exsertasque manus umerosque in ueste teneret …?*, "What if Deidamia had not given the hasty youngster a warning, embracing him in her fond bosom, had not always held his bared chest and naked arms and shoulders in her gown", and *Ars* 3.307–309 *pars umeri tamen ima tui, pars summa lacerti / nuda sit, a laeua conspicienda manu. / hoc uos praecipue, niueae, decet*, "Nevertheless let the lower part of your shoulder and the upper part of your arm be bare and easily seen from the left hand. This becomes you especially, you who have snowy skins"; cf. also Apollo's specular advice to men at 2.504.

52 Cf. Hom. *Il.* 9.438–440 (Phoenix): "It was to thee that the old horseman Peleus sent me

proper sense (not only as a synonym of "father-in-law" and an appellative of a "king"),[53] and considering him even dearer than his other 'fathers', as he at last fulfils the heroic vocation that they have nurtured:

> … sicut erat, nudis Lycomedem adfatur in armis:
> 'me tibi, care pater (dubium dimitte pauorem!),
> me dedit alma Thetis: te pridem tanta manebat
> gloria; quaesitum Danais tu mittis Achillen,
> gratior et magno, si fas dixisse, parente
> et dulci Chirone mihi'
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.891–896

> … sudden he addresses Lycomedes in naked weaponry, just as he was: "Mother Thetis gave me to you, dear father. Banish doubts and fears. Long has such glory awaited you. 'Tis you who send Achilles to the Danai, for whom they search; better loved by me, if it be lawful to say so, than my great parent and dear Chiron."

At the moment when Achilles' heroic career is re-started, even his absent father, Peleus, becomes visible again;[54] just at the moment when the hero, still in disguise, has already been discovered, the mention of his father has a crucial role. The opposed poetic aspirations of his parents are here put against each other by Ulysses, who urges the hero to reveal himself, so as to give "joy" to his father and "shame" to his mother:[55]

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on the day when he sent thee (πέμπε) to Agamemnon, forth from Phthia, a mere child"; 16.575–576; 18.58–59 (Thetis): "I sent him forth (ἐπιπροέηκα) in the beaked ships to Ilios to war with the Trojans"; cf. moreover Verg. *Ecl.* 4.35–36 *erunt etiam altera bella / atque iterum ad Troiam magnus mittetur Achilles*, "a second war will be fought, and great Achilles be sent again to Troy".

53 For these uses of *pater* see *ThlL* 10.1, 675.46–52 and 676.56 ff.; *EV* 3.1021; Traina (1997) on *A.* 12.13; Horsfall (2003) on 11.184 and 410; Tarrant (2012) on 12.50 and 166. Cf. 1.363–365 *accedit dictis pater ingenioque parentis / occultum Aeaciden … / accipit*, "The father assents to her words and accepts Achilles disguised by parental craft", where Thetis' entrusting Achilles to Lycomedes is portrayed as the entrusting of a child by a mother to a father.

54 See Heslin (2005) 286–294.

55 Cf. then 1.921–922 *mittitur Haemoniam, magnis qui Pelea factis / impleat et classem comitesque in proelia poscat*, "Word goes to Haemonia, to fill Peleus with these great doings and ask for ship and battle companions".

'et iuuet haec audire patrem, pudeatque dolosam
sic pro te timuisse Thetin.'
Stat. *Ach.* 1.873–874

"let your father rejoice to hear the news and wily Thetis be ashamed to have so feared for you."

The son must satisfy his father's expectations following in his footsteps: a recall to heroic ethics. There is more. Achilles has now become a father in his turn: and perhaps Ulysses is reminding him that, in the *Odyssey*, his shade will rejoice to hear from him the deeds of his son Neoptolemus,

'ὣς ἐφάμην, ψυχὴ δὲ ποδώκεος Αἰακίδαο
φοίτα μακρὰ βιβᾶσα κατ' ἀσφοδελὸν λειμῶνα,
γηθοσύνη ὅ οἱ υἱὸν ἔφην ἀριδείκετον εἶναι.'
Hom. *Od.* 11.538–540

"So I spoke, and the spirit of the son of Aeacus departed with long strides over the field of asphodel, joyful in that I said that his son was preeminent."

For Achilles to be reconverted to the κλέα ἀνδρῶν ("glories of heroes"), Ulysses must come to Scyros, make him touch weapons and hear the war trumpet. In the meantime, the plan of his mother, joined by Love, is able to be fulfilled. Thetis herself puts a self-reflexive seal on her creation, the Scyros episode, in the line by which she takes leave from the poem (as it stands):

'sit uirgo pii Lycomedis Achilles'
Stat. *Ach.* 1.396

"be Achilles good Lycomedes' maiden."

This is almost a title—and a famous one. Playing on the term *fama* ("Rumour", 1.394), the text proclaims, beyond Thetis' intentions, the literary fame of the Scyros episode. The poetic programme of the mother thus opposes that of Chiron, the education in heroism, for which Achilles had already become legendary;[56] a programme to which Ulysses will be able to bring him back, reminding him of his literary *status*:

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56 Cf. 1.476–479; 506–507; 577–579; 650–652; 2.86–91.

> 'scimus' ait, 'tu semiferi Chironis alumnus'
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.868

> "We know," he said. "You are half-beast Chiron's fosterling."

At Scyros, thanks to his mother, and to Love, "The half-beast Chiron's fosterling" has become for a while "The good Lycomedes' maiden"—a provisional, but unforgettable, deviation in the hero's poetic journey towards Troy.

Struggling for (Poetic) Memory: Royal Wives and Slaves

In the *Achilleid* the members of the hero's family bring different poetic genres into play and struggle to assert different literary memories.[57] After acting in a courtship-scene out of the *Ars amatoria*,[58] Deidamia takes on the role of the *relicta* and introduces another elegiac repertoire, the lament of the *Heroides*.[59]

The princess of Scyros shares with Ovid's heroines not just jealousy, but also anxiety about literary fame. That Achilles wants to remove the memory of the Scyros episode is something which Deidamia already anticipates, at the end of the first book:

> 'an tumidus Teucrosque lares et capta reportans
> Pergama uirgineae noles meminisse latebrae?'
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.933–934

> "Or when you proudly bring back Teucrian homes and captured Pergamus, will you wish to forget your maidenly hiding place?"

The heroine's fear that Achilles "will not want to remember" his hiding-place among the girls, on his return from Troy, will already be borne out in the outward journey, in the second book of the *Achilleid*.[60]

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57 Different characters even claim possession of Achilles. *Ach.* 1.37 (Thetis): '*meus ... Achilles*', "my Achilles"; 1.528 (Calchas): '*meus iste, meus*', "he is mine, mine" (for Calchas as "'protector of the plot' of the Trojan War" see Fantuzzi (2013) 161); 1.939 and 942 (Deidamia): '*o timor! abripitur miserae permissus Achilles ... i felix nosterque redi!*', "woe is me, Achilles is given and snatched away ... go and luck be with you, and come back still mine".

58 Micozzi (2008); Sanna (2007).

59 Rosati (1994b) 42–56; (1994a) 44–53.

60 See next paragraph.

Deidamia's whole lament is rich in self-reflexive signs, stressing the theme of memory, oblivion, and censure. This is the case at lines 1.947–948:

> 'ast egomet primae puerilis fabula culpae
> narrabor famulis aut dissimulata latebo.'
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.947–948

> "As for me, you will tell of me to your slaves, a boyish story of first fault, or you will say nothing about me, no one will know."

The heroine's elegiac fear of being removed from Achilles' tales, or reduced to an anecdote to be shared with his slaves (if not to a seducer's boast, alluding to his servile lover Briseis), risks hitting the mark: at an early stage, Achilles begins to edit his past. Even at a literary level, Deidamia's prophecy is right: her fear of being cancelled from memory reflects the censure of the Scyros episode exercised in the epic tradition, which is very largely hostile to such a scarcely heroic and dignified representation of Achilles.[61] To make up for it, through an allusion to the *Ars amatoria* Statius reminds us that Deidamia's fame is assured in different poetic forms; the heroine who fears to be reduced, in Achilles' heroic biography, to a *primae puerilis fabula culpae*, ignored or narrated to the slaves, is instead recognised by Ovid, for her affair with the hero, as a *fabula nota*:[62]

> fabula nota quidem, sed non indigna referri,
> Scyrias Haemonio iuncta puella uiro
>
> Ov. *Ars* 1.681–682

> Well-known, yet not undeserving of mention, is the tale of the Scyrian maid and her Haemonian lover.

61 A similar hint may also be present in 1.950–951 '*tu thyrsa manu Baccheaque mecum / sacra, quod infelix non credet Troia, tulisti*', "With me you handled *thyrsi* and Bacchus' holy gear, a thing unhappy Troy will not believe"; at a second level of meaning, the incredulity is suggested, and hence the will of removal and censure, as to a mythical episode that is so at odds with the Achilles of the *Iliad*.

62 An analogous phrase introduces the Homeric tale of Venus and Mars' adultery at *Ars* 2.561–562 *fabula narratur toto notissima caelo, / Mulciberis capti Marsque Venusque dolis*, "There is a story, most famous over all the world, of Mars and Venus caught by Mulciber's guile".

Through Deidamia's words, Statius comments on the censure of the Scyros episode exercised by a part of the literary critical and poetic tradition, perhaps including Homer.[63] In this as well, Statius learns from Ovid. In the *Heroides*, Ariadne asks Theseus not to cancel her from the glorious list of his deeds, and in so doing she polemicizes against the expurgation of the Naxos episode from the tradition more favourable to the hero: *me quoque narrato sola tellure relictam! / non ego sum titulis subripienda tuis*, "tell, too, of me, abandoned on a solitary shore—for I must not be stolen from the record of your honours!" (Ov. *Ep*. 10.129–130).[64]

Deidamia's jealous fears have an Ovidian precision: the Tyndarid, the slaves of the Troad, the *barbara coniunx* (1.943–946; 954–955) recall the hero's *liaisons* with Helen, Briseis, Medea;[65] Statius exploits the technique which Ovid's *Heroides* are founded on, the 'ironical prefiguration' of the mythical future through the heroine's words. Moreover, here too the text reflects on literary fame. Ironically, the princess seduced by Achilles censures the adulterous Helen, but she appears to envy Helen's "excessive fame", acquired through an *incesta rapina*: Paris' rape, not so far in style from that of Achilles, and yet so much more famous,

> '… aut ipsa placebit
> Tyndaris, incesta nimium laudata rapina.'
>
> Stat. *Ach*. 1.945–946

> "or Tyndareus' daughter herself will please you, praised overmuch for a wanton rape."[66]

The protest of the *relicta* is thus also a literary claim: the aspiration to renown on the part of the protagonist of a minor story, flourished on the margins of the grand epic.

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63 See Fantuzzi (2012) 27–28.

64 Cf. Ov. *Ep*. 10.125–130 and see Bessone (2011) 138–140. On the influence of Ovid's *Heroides* on Flavian epic see also Newlands in this volume.

65 Rosati (1994b) 56–58, with n. 102. The fear of Medea is most (literarily) motivated, even on a verbal level: '*pariat ne quid tibi barbara coniunx*', "that no barbarian wife bear child for you" (1.954), is a warning against the famous infanticide, the *barbara coniunx* by antonomasia, capable of avenging herself through the fruits of her womb (*pariat*); cf. Bessone (1997) on *Ep*. 12.188 *partus* and 208 *parturit*.

66 With *nimium laudata* cf. Ov. *Met*. 5.582. Deidamia's words reflect Helen's widespread negative renown: cf. Hom. *Il*. 6.356–358; E. *Or*. 249–250; Ov. *Am*. 2.18.37; *Ep*. 17.17–18, 33–34, 167–170, 207–210.

The jealousy towards slaves is here predominant, and *pour cause*:

> "iam te sperabunt lacrimis planctuque decorae
> Troades optabuntque tuis dare colla catenis
> et patriam pensare toris …
> … concede precanti
> hoc solum, pariat ne quid tibi barbara coniunx,
> ne qua det indignos Thetidi captiua nepotes."
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 1.943–945, 953–955

> "Soon the pretty Trojan girls with their tears and beating of breasts shall hope for you and pray to submit their necks to your chains, bartering country for couch […] this only grant me, that no barbarian wife bear child for you, no captive give Thetis unworthy grandsons."

Deidamia seems to have read not only Briseis' story in the *Iliad*, but also her lament in the *Heroides*[67]—indeed, her very reference to an erotic persuasion effected *lacrimis planctuque* (1.943) maybe a recognition of the existence of *Heroides* 3 and its programmatic insistence on tears as a means of moving Achilles (*quascumque adspicies, lacrimae fecere lituras; / sed tamen et lacrimae pondera uocis habent*, "Whatever blots you shall see, my tears have made; but tears, too, have none the less the weight of words", *Ep.* 3.3–4; 24; *ut taceam, lacrimis comminuere meis*, "even should I keep silence you will be broken by my tears", 134).

Deidamia's fear of being an object of gossip and boasting by Achilles to his slaves (*narrabor famulis*, 1.948) is a mirror reflection of Briseis' fear:

> nos humiles famulaeque tuae data pensa trahemus
> et minuent plenas stamina nostra colos.
> exagitet ne me tantum tua, deprecor, uxor,

67 Statius' allusive gesture and some verbal contacts with Ov. *Ep.* 3 are observed by Rosati (1994b) 55–56 (cf. *Ach.* 1.945 cit. *pensare* with *Ep.* 3.51 *tot tamen amissis te compensauimus unum*, "for so many lost to me I still had only you in recompense", and see Briseis' self-definition as *captiua* and *famulae*, *Ep.* 3.69 and 75). Further points could be added: cf. e.g. *Ep.* 3.73 *digna nurus socero*, "a bride worthy of her lord's father", with *Ach.* 1.955 cited in the text (*indignos*). Conversely, at least one point in Briseis' epistle may allude to the Scyros episode in its non-Homeric version: *Ep.* 3.37—*sed non opus est tibi coniuge*—, "—though of a bride you have no need—", is perhaps, not only a claim by the slave of her own status as a 'wife', but also an ironical hint by Ovid to Deidamia's existence.

quae mihi nescio quo non erit aequa modo,
neue meos coram scindi patiare capillos
et leuiter dicas 'haec quoque nostra fuit'.
uel patiare licet, dum ne contempta relinquar;
hic mihi—uae miserae!—concutit ossa metus

Ov. *Ep*. 3.75–82

As for me, I shall be a lowly slave of yours and spin off the given task, and the full distaff shall grow slender at the drawing of my threads. Only let not your lady be harsh with me, I pray—for in some way I feel she will not be kind—and suffer her not to tear my hair before your eyes, while you lightly say of me: "She, too, once was mine". Or, suffer it even so, if only I am not despised and left behind—this is the fear, ah woe is wretched me, that shakes my very bones!

In Statius, Achilles' Scyrian wife counters the slave's fear (*nos ... famulae*) of being recalled by Achilles (*dicas*) as a former beloved ('*haec quoque nostra fuit*') to his legitimate wife, while she as a master maltreats her.[68] The scandal of Achilles in love with a slave is too famous in Latin erotic poetry for Statius to miss the opportunity to comment on it, in the words of the hero's royal wife: Deidamia's prayer clashes with the non-Homeric literary role of 'the best of the Achaeans' as a paradigm for the triumphant power of Love, conquering even social differences.[69]

The allusive exchanges between Deidamia and Briseis do not end here. I have analysed elsewhere a passage which is in my opinion crucial to the interpretation of the *Achilleid*: the simulation, guided by Ulysses, of the Iliadic episode of "Achilles' Anger".[70] On the ship, as a reply to Achilles who wants immediately to conceive "a just anger" (*libet iustas hinc sumere protinus iras*, "I am fain to draw just wrath from the tale here and now", 2.48), Ulysses narrates the causes of the Trojan War, and provokes the hero with the virtual hypothesis of a rape of Deidamia. Achilles blushes, and brings his hand to the sword (2.84): the very gesture by which, in the *Iliad*, he was ready to avenge against Agamemnon the offence of another rape, the abduction of Briseis (Hom. *Il*. 1.219–221). The text presupposes the romantic reading of the relationship between Achilles and Briseis, which developed—from hints implicit in the

68 Barchiesi on Ov. *Ep*. 3.80 registers the parallel. With *haec quoque nostra fuit* cit. cf. *Ars* 2.628.

69 Cf. Hor. *Carm*. 2.4.1–4; Ov. *Am*. 2.8.9–14 (see also *Ars* 2.711–716); implicitly, Prop. 2.8.29–38.

70 Cf. above, n. 6. See also Barchiesi (2005) 70–71 and n. 31.

Homeric text—in later reinterpretations of the *Iliad*, from the scholia to Latin elegy.[71] Statius too rereads Homer through his reception: and, in designing a hero who takes the sword and blushes at the same time (2.84–85), he makes visible the mingling of anger and love by reference to which the posthomeric tradition explained "Achilles' Anger", from the Horace of the *Epistles*, to Propertius, to Ovid.[72]

Tacuit contentus Ulixes ("Ulysses was content and said no more", 2.85): Ulysses can indeed be content, and Statius no less; together, they have managed to bring the enamoured hero of the *Achilleid* exactly where they wanted: right up to the beginning of the *Iliad*. But this really is another story.

Constructing the Memory of a Father, Master and Commander—and of Oneself as a Hero

After Scyros, the re-alignment of the *Achilleid* as a war epos is not to be taken for granted. From now on, Achilles is shown as he tries to close the narrative parenthesis opened by his mother and to project himself into a different future. But Achilles' ambition to heroic epic clashes with an existential and literary experience that it is difficult to put in parentheses. Love, which has made an irruption into the epic narrative, has hybridised perhaps irreversibly the nature of this poem. Above all, the mixture of tones and the ironic inflexion that characterise the first part of the *Achilleid* could have continued.

In the second book Statius makes a caricature of Achilles' hyper-epic pretensions, as in the first book he had been ironic about Thetis' anti-epic aspirations: the first moves of the near-Iliadic hero are looked at by Statius as ironically as the comic-novelistic plots of his mother. The narrator appears disposed to depict his hero with detachment, or even to make fun of him, in a manner much more similar to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* than to Homeric epos. Thus, the two literary agendas that compete for control of the poem—the *mise en scène* of the mother and the epic projection of the son—relativise each other; the poetic option that appears finally to win out—the *arma uirum*, "the arms of the heroes"—turns out to be substantially modified by the feminine and maternal deviation which has been given to the prior stages of the narrative; and it is surrounded by the same poignant and disenchanted atmosphere.

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71 See Fantuzzi (2012) chapter 3.

72 Hor. *Ep*. 1.2.13 (with Rudd (1980)); Prop. 2.8.29–36; Ov. *Ep*. 3.89–90; 8.85–86; *Tr*. 2.373.

Mother and son compete for control of the narrative, even after Thetis has left the stage. At the beginning of the second book, Achilles' counter-metamorphosis is complete:

> et iam punicea nudatum pectora palla
> insignemque ipsis, quae primum inuaserat, armis
> Aeaciden (quippe aura uocat cognataque suadent
> aequora) prospectant cuncti iuuenemque ducemque
> nil ausi meminisse pauent; sic omnia uisu
> mutatus rediit, ceu numquam Scyria passus
> litora Peliacoque rates escendat ab antro.
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 2.5–11

> And now all look to Aeacides, as with breast stripped of purple cloak he shines with the arms on which he had first seized (for the breeze summons and the kindred seas persuade); they fear him as warrior and captain, not daring to remember aught. So he returned all changed to view, as though he had never endured Scyros' shores and were embarking from Pelion's cavern.

Everybody fears the young leader and "dares not remember anything" of what has been: *nil ausi meminisse* (2.9) is the first sign of the suppression of memory through which Achilles, more than any other, would like to put in parentheses the mother plot that has brought him to Scyros.[73] His aspect, apparently at least (*uisu*), is completely changed (*omnia mutatus*). And it is "as if" the hero "had never undergone" the dishonour of the Scyrian episode. The hypothetical comparative sentence (*ceu … escendat*) seems almost to authorise a selective re-reading of the poem, that makes his boarding of the ship follow directly on from the stay in Chiron's cave, and expunges as an interpolation everything that comes in between in the text (a direct voyage by Achilles, from Mount Pelion to Troy, is in fact attested in Euripides' *Electra*).[74]

But, despite outward appearance, Scyros has left in Achilles, as well as in the *Achilleid*, irreversible traces—however much he himself strives to cancel them. Here the hero exploits in self-defence the claim of excessive obedience to his

73 See Hinds (2000) 241–244, and his observation (p. 241) that "at an important level, the beginning of the *Achilleid*'s second book actually dramatizes or "stages" a metapoetic meditation on the (in)appropriateness of the whole Scyrian episode to the epic narrative that it has inaugurated".

74 E. *El.* 432–451.

mother by reference to which part of the tradition had justified his consent to the disguise:

> 'paruimus, genetrix, quamquam haud toleranda iuberes,
> paruimus nimium'
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 2.17–18

> "Mother, I obeyed you though your commands were more than I could bear, too much I obeyed"

but the erotic motive, that Achilles now censors, is evident from his gestures. The text thus deflates the hero's claims to literary unidimensionality. Statius demonstrates that the experiment of the *Achilleid*, by integrating the Scyros episode into Achilles' heroic career, has transformed the epic tradition, reinterpreting even Homer and the *Iliad* in line with erotic-elegiac poetry.

There is another point I want to stress. The poetic encyclopedia on Achilles that Statius is writing resembles more and more that encyclopedic poem which is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: where the history of the world is also an encyclopedia of genres, and different narrative and stylistic registers alternate and relativise each other. It is a world very far from Homer, even when it re-narrates Homeric subjects and heroes; and to that world, not to the *Iliad*, this Achilles belongs: even when the Homeric heritage becomes more dominant, on the eve of the Trojan War.[75]

Let us finally turn to Achilles' account of his foster-father, and to the self-reflexive signs commenting on it. On the ship, Achilles consents to Diomedes' request to tell of his education by Chiron. The young hero seems to be waiting for nothing else: he feigns modesty, shows himself uncertain, as if he is forced to do so, but in the meantime the narrator insinuates that recounting his own deeds is not at all unpleasant to Achilles:

> quem pigeat sua facta loqui? tamen ille modeste
> incohat, ambiguus paulum propiorque coacto
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 2.94–95

> Whom would it irk to tell of his own deeds? Yet he begins modestly, a little hesitant, rather as if constrained.

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75 On Achilles in the 'little *Iliad*' of the *Metamorphoses* see Galasso (2004); Papaioannou (2007); Labate (2010) 21–27.

Achilles is good at pretending that he is forced to do what in fact he wants to do: we have seen him in front of Thetis *ambiguum cogique uolentem*, "*uncertain and willing to* be forced" (1.325), weakly refusing the feminine dress, once he has fallen in love.[76] His brief hesitation before pronouncing his speech (*paulum*) resembles a trick by an accomplished orator, even worthy of Ulysses, who in the *armorum iudicium* of the *Metamorphoses* lingers "for a little while" (*paulum*), his eyes to the ground, to arouse expectation.[77]

Above all, the rhetorical question by the narrator (*quem pigeat sua facta loqui?*) alludes to—and comments on—an analogous ironic intervention by Ovid of Achilles, in the 'little *Iliad*' of the *Metamorphoses*.[78] There, the Greek heroes converse at a banquet, celebrating Achilles' victory over Cycnus, and epically tell each other their own deeds;[79] those tales are a pleasure for everybody (*commemorare iuuat*, "they relished … recounting", *Met.* 12.163), but above all for Achilles:

> … quid enim loqueretur Achilles,
> aut quid apud magnum potius loquerentur Achillem?
> Ov. *Met.* 12.163–164

> What else indeed should be Achilles' theme? What else their theme with great Achilles there?

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76 1.323–326 *mulcetur laetumque rubet uisusque proteruos / obliquat uestesque manu leuiore repellit. / aspicit ambiguum genetrix cogique uolentem / iniecitque sinus*, "He is softened and blushes for joy, casting sly, wanton glances, and lightens the hand that pushes the garments away. His mother sees his indecision, sees that he would fain be forced, and throws the folds over him".

77 Ov. *Met.* 13.124–127; see Hopkinson (2000) ad loc., quoting Quint. *Inst.* 11.3.157. Cf. also Stat. *Theb.* 5.28–29 (Hypsipyle) *ingemit, et paulum fletu cunctata modesto / Lemnias orsa refert*, "The Lemnian sighs, stays awhile in modest tears, then makes reply", cited by Ripoll and Soubiran (2008).

78 The Ovidian parallel is also noticed by Klodt (2009) 196 n. 5.

79 Ov. *Met.* 12.157–162 *non illos citharae, non illos carmina uocum / longaue multifori delectat tibia buxi, / sed noctem sermone trahunt, uirtusque loquendi / materia est; pugnam referunt hostisque suamque, / inque uices adita atque exhausta pericula saepe / commemorare iuuat …*, "No harp played for their pleasure, no songs, no boxwood flutes of many holes; the night grew long with talking and their theme was valour. Tales were told of how they fought and how their foes; they relished, turn by turn, recounting dangers shared and overborne". See Galasso (2004) 97; Papaioannou (2007) 77; Newlands (2012) 93.

Celebrating the glories of the heroes, but above all of himself, is a predilection of Achilles': Statius has already played on this vanity by the protagonist.[80] Here, in his first test in a key motif of epic, i.e. the hero's *apologoi*, the pre-Iliadic Achilles transfigures his education by Chiron into a small '*Bildungsepos*'—a pre-*Iliad* in miniature—, constructing on his own a heroic-epic image of himself. At the same time, he tries to cast into oblivion everything that followed, confining it to a fictive space created and known only by his mother.

Another self-reflexive sign, and a strongly ironic one, in fact closes Achilles' tale, and the poem:

> 'hactenus annorum, comites, elementa meorum
> et memini et meminisse iuuat: scit cetera mater.'
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 2.166–167

> "So far, comrades, I remember the training of my early years and joy in the memory. My mother knows the rest."

Mater is the word on which the *Achilleid* has closed for ever.[81] Thetis had proposed her son the deceit on Scyros, assuring him that Chiron would not know it: '*nesciet hoc Chiron*' (1.274 cit.); Achilles now claims that nobody but his mother knows that story: '*scit cetera mater*'.

Hactenus indicates the end of a speech, but it is also a sign of a voluntary selection of memories; and the correlation *et memini et meminisse iuuat* says, with a peremptory force, "that's it": all that Achilles remembers, and all that he "wants" to remember and he "likes" to remember, to the exclusion of all the rest.[82] Statius here varies some Ovidian lines, from Glaucus' first-person narrative of his own metamorphosis:

> 'hactenus acta tibi possum memoranda referre,
> hactenus et memini; nec mens mea cetera sensit.'
>
> Ov. *Met.* 13.956–957

80 Cf. 1.577–579, and Micozzi (2008) 138–140; cf. also 1.188–194 (*canit ille libens immania laudum / semina …*, "Willingly he sings mighty seeds of glory"), where the last theme in Achilles' song, his parents' wedding, sounds like a prelude to the hero's own future deeds, as prophesied in the song of the Parcae in Catul. 64; see Heslin (2005) 88.

81 See also Delarue (2008) 81.

82 At the same time, the hero appears to claim for himself the authority attributed to the Muses by Vergil, with a formal matrix that seems to be reproduced here: Verg. *A.* 7.645 *et meministis enim, diuae, et memorare potestis* "for you, goddesses, both remember and are able to remind" (on which see Seider (2013) 11; 129–130).

"so far I can relate what I recall, so far remember; but the rest is lost."

The difference between the situations creates an ironical effect at the expense of Achilles. In the culminating moment of his transformation from man to god, Glaucus lost consciousness: therefore, he is not able to remember what he did not perceive ('*quae postquam rediit, alium me corpore toto, / ac fueram nuper, neque eundem mente recepi*', "When sense returned, I found myself in body another self, nor was my mind the same", *Met.* 13.958–959). Achilles, by his disguise, has experienced a metamorphosis, but a wholly conscious and chosen one; for him, unlike for Glaucus, partial memory is a voluntary act of selection.[83]

Even in the course of the narrative, Statius is ironical about the manipulation of memory, and commemoration, by Achilles. At line 137:

'uix memorem cunctos, etsi bene gessimus, actus.'
Stat. *Ach.* 2.137

"I could scarce recall all I did, though I did it well."

a traditional formula of epos is employed for a boy's 'deeds', with an ironical twist;[84] moreover, Achilles passes over the rhetorical forms of the *praeteritio*, forcibly inserts a concessive clause into it (*etsi bene gessimus*), and thus protests against the epic convention that extols the *Fülle von Stoff* declining to set it out in full. Alien to the principle of Alexandrian selectivity, Achilles has a very clear grasp of the fundamental principle of heroic ethics and heroic poetry, according to which "well accomplished" deeds must be remembered, to gain glory and avoid oblivion;[85] if, then, his deeds are good, it is a pity not to commemorate them all. Critics who have judged this line "very weak", the reading *bene* (in P and R) corrupt, or the phrase *bene gerere* flat,[86] have not been willing to relish Statius' irony: the clumsiness of this move, the very simplicity of his direct language depict the naïvety of Achilles, an ambitious and already expert *aoidos*, but a disarming one when he sings of himself.

83 Cf. also Achilles' monologue, 1.635 '—*pudet haec taedetque fateri*—', "shame and disgust to confess it!".

84 For a similar formula in a hero's tale of his own deeds, cf. Ov. *Met.* 13.159–161 (Ulysses).

85 Hor. *Carm.* 4.8.20–22 *neque, / si chartae sileant quod bene feceris, / mercedem tuleris* ..., "nor would you reap your reward if no pages gave voice to your achievements"; see Fedeli and Ciccarelli (2008) on l. 21.

86 Dilke (1954) ad loc.; Hall (2007) prints in the text his conjecture *modo*.

One deed this Achilles "remembers" above all, and chooses to commemorate in a grand style, in the *climax* of his narrative: it is the 'battle' with the river that Chiron imposed on him, a rehearsal of the μάχη παραποτάμιος of *Iliad* 21. Here, the incidental '*memini*' ("I remember", 2.143) is the most evident of metaliterary signs: the recollection of the *Iliad* is signposted by the vocabulary of memory, the most typical Ovidian indicator of literary memory.[87]

There is no time, here, to analyse the rest of Achilles' tale, but I would like to point to a couple of details, so as to show in the end how the hero constructs the memory of a father (a more severe than loving one) who is at the same time an inflexible educator and a military commander.

In the first book, Statius had shown the tender nocturnal embrace between pupil and teacher (1.195–197, cit. above, § 3), almost evoking the chaste and 'familial' embrace between Socrates and Alcibiades, mentioned in Plato's *Symposion*:

> "Well … so up I got, and without suffering the man to say a word more I wrapped my own coat about him—it was winter time; drew myself under his cloak, so; wound my arms about this truly spiritual and miraculous creature; and lay thus all the night long … you may be sure, by gods—and goddesses—that when I arose I had in no more particular sense slept a night with Socrates than if it had been with my father or my elder brother"
>
> Pl. *Smp.* 219 b

Here this very image of sleeping together on the bare rock takes on instead a soldierly connotation, pertaining to the rhetoric of the good commander and good soldier:[88]

> '… tenero nec fluxa cubili
> membra, sed ingenti saxum commune magistro.'
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 2.108–109

> "limbs not loosened by soft bedding, but a rock shared with my huge master."

From being a father and teacher, in Achilles' version, Chiron is promoted to the rank of general.

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87 Conte (1985^2) 35–40; Miller (1993).

88 Cf. Fantham (1999) 64; (2003) 120.

Even the image of the Centaur waiting for the hero's return from hunting is unrecognizable from the first book, and from Pindar's model. In the third *Nemean Ode*, a six-year-old Achilles brings to his teacher "palpitating" preys (σώματα δὲ παρὰ Κρονίδαν / Κένταυρον ἀσθμαίνοντα κόμιζεν, "he carried their gasping corpses back to the Kronian Centaur", Pi. *N.* 3.47–48); Statius' Achilles, who has already exploited the traditional element veiled by Pindar—the half-alive beasts as the baby's food—,[89] now transforms the return from hunting into a military "inspection":

> 'ipse sedens uasto facta exspectabat in antro,
> si sparsus nigro remearem sanguine; nec me
> ante nisi inspectis admisit ad oscula telis'
>
> Stat. *Ach.* 2.126–128

> "Himself would sit in his vast cave and wait for my exploits: would I return splashed with black blood? Nor did he admit me to his kiss until he had inspected my weapons".

Here, the loving kiss of the father, or teacher, is subordinated to the commander's approval; the prey is not on display, only the blood on the weapons; and the memory of Lucan's Caesar, who "inspects" the swords at Pharsalus, for an instant even transforms the peaceful Centaur into the image of a bloody leader:

> hic Caesar, rabies populi stimulusque furorum,
> ne qua parte sui pereat scelus, agmina circum
> it uagus atque ignes animis flagrantibus addit;
> inspicit et gladios qui toti sanguine manent,
> qui niteant primo tantum mucrone cruenti
>
> Luc. 7.557–561

> Here Caesar, maddening the men and stirring up their frenzy, moved to and fro round the ranks and added fuel to the fire of their passion, in order that wickedness might not anywhere be wrought in vain: his eye marks whether their blades stream with blood from point to hilt, or glitter still with only the points reddened.

89 2.96–100 '*dicor … spissa leonum / uiscera semianimisque lupae traxisse medullas*', "they say that … I … tore at the tough flesh of lions and offal of a she-wolf still half alive"; see Robertson (1940); Barchiesi (1996) 55; Heslin (2005) 173–175.

On his journey to Troy, Achilles not only censors his sentimental education in Scyros, but magnifies his heroic education on Mount Pelion by a coefficient that the reader can almost measure. Like the other family members, ambitious constructors of stories, the protagonist hero claims an absolute narrative authority that the external narrator does not grant him. The family story of Achilles, in the completed part of the *Achilleid*, is a family conflict that is set far from the tragic stage of the *Thebaid*, and from the epic terrain of the *Iliad* or the *Aeneid*—much nearer to the narrative world, relative and fluid, of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

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Dynastic Triads: Flavian Resonances and Structural Antithesis in Silius' Sons of Hamilcar

Joy Littlewood

Family Matters

Roman historical epic retains to a large extent the patriarchal values of the *Iliad*.[1] As the epic conflict ebbs and flows through victories, routs and the sack of cities, the *fama* of heroes is measured by the glory or shame that they bring to their family or *gens*. The second half of Silius' epic illustrates the fulfilment of Jupiter's prophecy in *Punica* 3, that Rome's suffering in the Second Punic War will lead to moral regeneration.[2] Silius' understanding that Roman civic morality depended largely on the values of Rome's most illustrious and ancient *gentes* may be illustrated by two contrasting scenes. The first marks the beginning of the resurgence of Rome's traditional *mos maiorum* (*fides, patientia, audacia* and *perseuerantia*) in the second half of the *Punica*.

In the aftermath of the battle of Cannae some Roman nobles are persuaded to flee into voluntary exile by the eldest son of the illustrious L. Caecilius Metellus.[3] Silius introduces the conspiracy by emphasizing Metellus' degeneracy from the moral values of the family in which he has been raised:

> dux erat exilii **non laetus Marte** Metellus,
> sed **stirpe haud parui cognominis**. is mala bello
> pectora **degeneremque manum** ad **deformia** agebat
> consulta.
>
> Sil. 10.420–423

> The leader of the would-be exiles was Metellus, a man devoid of warrior zeal although he came from an illustrious family. It was he who lured their cowards' hearts and degenerate clique into a shameful conspiracy.[4]

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1 See Hardie (1993) 88–98.

2 Sil. 3.584–585: *ueniet tempus quo … nobilior sit Roma malis*.

3 Twice consul in 251, 247 BC, L. Caecilius Metellus was dictator 224, *triumphator* 250, *pontifex maximus* 243–221. The conspiracy of his son, briefly mentioned in Liv. 22.53.5, V. Max. 5.6.7, was regarded as a disgrace to the Metelli, as a sequel to which, according to Livy (27.11.12) he was subsequently deposed from the senate (Flower, 1996, 137, n. 39).

4 Translations in this paper are by the author.

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The poet's opening criticism of Metellus' faint-hearted attitude to war (*non laetus Marte*),[5] and his regression from the virtue of the Metelli (*stirpe haud parui cognominis*) is reinforced by the wording of the second sentence, in which *degenerem* implies "unworthy of his *gens*" and *deformia ... consulta* a line of conduct deviant from the moral expectations of the Roman nobility. What precisely these expectations were is set forth clearly as the aspirations and attainments of the elder Metellus in his funeral oration delivered by the brother of the conspirator in 221 BC:

> primarium bellatorem esse, optimum oratore, fortissimum imperatorem, auspicio suo maximas res geri, maximo honore uti, summa sapientia esse, summum senatorem haberi, percuniam magnam bono modo inuenire, multos liberos relinquere et clarissimum in ciuitate esse.
>
> Plin. *Nat.* 7.139

> (He aspired to be) a most valiant soldier, an excellent orator, a first-class commander, the instigator of mighty enterprises, highly respected, supremely wise, wealthy by honest means, the father of many sons and greatly honoured by his countrymen.

Metellus' plot to flee Italy is summarily scotched by a nineteen year old *tribunus militum*, P. Cornelius Scipio, blazing with moral indignation (*flammata mente*, Sil. 10.426), who imposes military obedience on the conspirators with the choice of death or swearing a group oath of loyalty.

> ... ni talia sancis
> quem tremis et cuius somnos formidine rumpis,
> Hannibal hic armatus adest: moriere, nec ullo
> Poenorum melior parietur gloria caeso.
>
> Sil. 10.442–445

> Unless you swear this oath, here before you, fully armed, is Hannibal, who makes you tremble and spring terrified from sleep. You will die and the slaughter of no single Carthaginian will earn greater glory!

5 This reading of line 420, which differs from the text of Delz (1986), *dux erat exiio collectis Marte Metellus*, is a convincing conjecture by Summers in Postgate's edition (1904) supported by the antithesis of Metellus' illustrious lineage introduced by *sed* in line 421.

Scipio's regard for *fides*, manifested in his upholding the sacrosanctity of the oath of loyalty, aligns him with Rome's traditional values (*sacrata gens clara fide*, Sil. 1.634). At the same time his decision to swear by the spirit of his father, the elder P. Cornelius Scipio, in conjunction with Rome's highest gods, recalls his filial *pietas* at the Battle of the Ticinus when he carries his wounded father out of danger on his shoulders in the iconic Augustan posture of *pietas*.[6] Subsequent illustrations of Scipio's developing *uirtus* and *mores* exemplified by his ancestors is demonstrated in his Nekyia[7] when his father's ghost salutes him as *decus nostrum* (666), "an adornment to our family", and the young man watches "with worshipful gaze" (*prosequitur oculis puer adueneratus euntes*, 704) the departure of his father and uncle.

Having demonstrated the integrity of Scipio's *audacia* and respect for *fides*,[8] Silius entrusts Rome's moral and military resurgence to the more experienced hands of Fabius, Marcellus and Fulvius Flaccus through Books 10–15 in which the progress of Scipio's *Bildungsroman* runs parallel with the military epic narrative.[9] The completion of Scipio's preparation for his epic destiny culminates in a second illustration of the patriarchal bias of Roman epic when Scipio mounts the *rostra* to ask for the command in Spain.

> at iuuenis, plenus monitis, ingentia corde
> molitur iussaeque calent uirtutis amore.
> ardua rostra petit, nullo fera bella uolente,
> et grauia ancipitis deposcit munera Martis.
> arrecti cunctorum animi: **pars lumina patris**
> **pars credunt toruos patrui reuirescere uultus**.
>
> Sil. 15.129–134

> Inspired by (Virtus') advice, the young man was filled with great ambition and longed to achieve heroic valour. Scipio ascended the speakers'

6 Sil. 4.467, 470–471: *innixum ceruice ferens umeroque parentem / … / … / … pietasque insignis et aetas / belligeris fecit miranda silentia campis.*

7 Sil. 13.650–704.

8 Fides was closely associated with the sacrosanctity of keeping an oath: *qui ius igitur iurandum uiolat, is Fidem uiolat*, Cic. *Off.* 3.104. Cf. Liv. 22.58.9–10, who condemns as un-Roman one of those negotiating ransom money for prisoners taken at Cannae. Under oath to return to Hannibal, he fulfils his oath fraudulently by going back to camp for something which he pretended to have forgotten.

9 For example, the death of the two elder Scipiones in Spain precipitates Scipio's Nekyia (Sil. 13.381–395) while the lack of a military leader in Spain inspires his choice of Virtus over Voluptas (Sil. 15.1–3, 10–123).

> platform and, when no one else desired it, asked that he be given the responsibility of commander-in-chief in a war of uncertain outcome. This arrested the attention of all: some saw the eyes of his father blaze again, others, the fiery gaze of his uncle.

In this dramatic scene, on fire with the heroism that enabled him earlier to coerce Metellus into loyalty and will eventually lead him to victory at Zama, Scipio astonishes his audience by his resemblance, in his fiery belligerence, to his illustrious father and uncle. A timely omen eradicates their momentary hesitation to entrust to the young man command of the Roman armies in a region become volatile through the defeat of the elder Scipiones. It is publicly recognized that the younger Scipio "should follow in the steps of his father" (*patrio monstraret semita signo*, 15.148) so that, according to traditional epic criteria, the son is judged by the virtues of his family.[10]

The Sons of the Fathers

The younger P. Scipio's devotion to and dependence on his father is evinced by passionate emotional reactions. As an adolescent, the spectacle of his father wounded at the Trebia had induced paroxysms of tears and the threat of suicide before Scipio plunged recklessly through the ranks to fetch his father out of the battle.[11] Six years later, when he receives the news of his father's death in Spain,[12] his companions cannot check his violent manifestations of grief (*pulsato lacerat uiolenter pectore amictus*, 13.389). Oblivious of the dignity of his rank (*non ullus honorum / militiaeque pudor*, 390–391) he rages at the cruelty of the gods (*pietas irata sinistris / caelicolis furit*, 391–392) before attempting to assuage his grief (*tantos mulcere dolores*, 396) by visiting the spirits of both father and uncle in the Underworld. As further *exempla* of dynastic *pietas* Silius emphasizes their protective instincts towards the future hero of the *Punica*.[13] When, as commander of the Roman armies in what he describes as *pia bella* (15.162) the younger Scipio is again visited by his father's and uncle's ghost, this time offering military counsel, he dutifully begs them

10 On generational continuity in epic see Hardie (1993) 88–98, Tipping (2010a) 111–114, 145–163, Bernstein (2010) 381–390.

11 Sil. 4.454–468.

12 Sil. 13.381–396.

13 See especially Sil. 13.666–669.

to take his place (*este duces bello!* 204). Only when he has laid their ghosts to rest in the performance of their funeral rites in Book 16, does Scipio attain full manhood. Significantly the epic narrative passes directly from the conclusion of the Funeral Games to Scipio confronting the Roman senate where he defeats old Fabius in his argument that the war must now be transferred to Africa.[14]

As a contrast to the family devotion inherent in the loyalty uniting a Roman military dynasty Silius constructs a parallel, but distinctively different, *exemplum* of family *pietas* in the Carthaginian Hamilcar and his eldest son, Hannibal. When Scipio encounters Hamilcar in his Nekyia shortly after he has learnt that his father and uncle met a noble death fighting with an enemy whose victory was procured by bribery,[15] he accuses both father and son with perfidiously broken treaties which have caused carnage throughout Italy.[16] Still burning with unquenchable anger against Rome (*irarum seruat rabiem*, 13.734), Hamilcar's ferocious shade (*saeuam … umbram*, 13.732), puts forward an argument entirely consistent with Roman aristocratic morality, an oath sworn in the name of national gods may not be broken (*licitum nec fallere diuos / iuratos patri*, 746–747),[17] and he praises his son for his loyalty to family, his unviolated oath and proving a worthy son. His triadic apostrophe of sacred Roman virtues (*o pietas, o sancta fides, o uera propago*! 749) might more obviously have described the elder P. Cornelius Scipio's assessment of his son's actions. In the present context it accentuates Silius' sense of dramatic irony for the oath that Hannibal has kept so scrupulously to make ceaseless war on Rome is in itself a violation of the peace treaty imposed upon Carthage by Rome at the end of the First Punic War.[18] On one level the senator-poet drily observes the *Realpolitik* of an unbridgeable gap between two warring nations in their disparate interpretations of *fides* and *perfidia*. On another the impact of Hamilcar's apostrophe is shocking because it appears to attribute Rome's most sacred family values to the monster Hannibal, a more apposite illustration of whose *improba uir-*

14 Sil. 16.604–700.

15 Silius adjusts Livy's account of the campaign to disguise the fact that the Scipiones were defeated more by the two brothers separating their two armies than by Hasdrubal bribing their Spanish mercenaries to desert. Cf. Liv. 25.33–36.

16 Sil. 13.738–743.

17 See Bernstein (2008) 135–139.

18 For Silius' version of Hannibal's oath see Sil. 1.114–119. Mocking their loyalty to their *foedera* with Rome Hannibal tells the besieged Saguntines: *scita patrum et leges et iura fidemque deosque / in dextra nunc esse sua*. (1.303–304). For the terms of the peace treaty at the end of the First Punic War see Plb. 1.62.1–63.3, 3.27.1–6, D.S. 24.13, Nep. *Ham*. 1.5.

tus (Sil. 1.58) being his summary slaughter of the six sons of Crista, out of contempt for their unanimous attempt to avenge their father's death (*stultae fructus pietatis*, Sil. 10.138).

Brothers-at-Arms

Fraternal devotion was highly rated in Roman myth and cult. Worshipped in Lavinium from the sixth century, the Dioscuri offered a salutary mythic counterpart to the fratricide of Romulus and Remus,[19] providing a dynastic model of fraternal concord to the warring descendants of Augustus.[20] Similar architectural ideology would later mask dynastic discord between the Flavian brothers, Titus and Domitian. Representing the reality that fathers and brothers from Rome's leading *gentes* often fought together or even held joint command in the field, Roman epic favoured, as an ideal of *pietas*, the Iliadic motif of pairs of brothers fighting and dying together like Virgil's Pandarus and Bitias.[21] At the opposite end of the spectrum brothers fighting against each other (*fraterna comminus arma*, Luc. 7.467) supplied the *locus communis* for civil war, the worst form of *nefas*.

There is some disparity between the historiographic and the epic version of the Spanish campaign in 212 BC of Publius and Gnaeus Scipio. Livy attributes their double defeat to their decision to confront the Carthaginians separately by dividing the two Roman armies.[22] To avoid impressions of a divided command, a leitmotif which shadows the defeat of Rome's armies through the first half of the *Punica*,[23] Silius takes pains to emphasize the mutual and loving harmony that unites the Scipiones as brothers-at-arms (*simulacra uirum*

19 See Weinstock (1960) 112 for a sixth century inscription honouring the Dioscuri at Lavinium.

20 Tiberius vowed and dedicated temples to Concordia and Castor and Pollux the former to advertise dynastic unity, the latter to honour his dead brother Drusus.

21 Verg. *A.* 9.672–754. See Harrison (1991) n. 125–126 for Iliadic models from fraternal pairings in *A.* 7.670; 10.328, 351–352, 403, 575; 11.604; 12.270 ff., 509, 516. Cf. Silius' 6 sons of Crista (Sil. 10.92–169) and his Capuan brothers, Virbius, Capys and Albanus, Sil. 4.396–398: *felices leti, pietas quos addidit umbris! / optabunt similes uenientia saecula fratres, / aeternumque decus memori celebrabitur aeuo*.

22 Liv. 25.32–36.

23 For divisions in the high command at Gerunium, see Sil. 7.515, and at Cannae 8.349–350. On the theme of internal divisions in the *Punica*, see Marks (2005), (2008), (2010), Tipping (2010b) 216–218 and Littlewood (2011), (forthcoming).

concordia, patris / unanimique simul patrui, Sil. 13.650–651) in a shared disaster (*geminae ... ruinae*, 694) and burial (*tumulus ... geminus*, 659–660). Similarly the brief single appearance of Scipio's younger brother at the funeral games which they hold together for their father and uncle serves only to emphasize fraternal unanimity. The younger Scipio and Laelius, ceremonially dressed in purple (*effulgens ... ostro*, 16.576), hurl their spears and call upon the elder Scipiones for the last time. At this moment the elder brother, radiant with joy (*testatus gaudia uultu*, 580) then rewards the loyalty (*pia pectora*, 581) of his brother and friend, by giving his brother magnificent gold armour.

Hasdrubal: Shadow of a Barcid

In the aftermath of the First Punic War in 237 BC, Hamilcar Barca, estimated by Polybius to be the best general on either side,[24] headed a military expedition to Spain. His purpose was to strengthen trade links, to restore Carthage's material prosperity with the wealth of Iberia and to train a new army of Spanish mercenaries. Until his death some ten years later his three sons received an unrelenting military training in a campaign where they grew accustomed to the prospect of a future war with Rome. Although there is some basis in Livy and Polybius for the characters which Silius constructs for Hannibal and his two younger brothers, these are poetically slanted in the *Punica* partly to reinforce an ethnic stereotype generally attributed to the Carthaginians by Roman writers, partly, in the epic's *Makrostruktur*, to associate Hannibal with the rise and Hasdrubal with the decline of Carthaginian fortunes in Italy.

Hasdrubal is depicted by both historians as effective, shrewd and ruthless during his decade as governor of Spain, 218–208 BC, following his brother's departure for Italy.[25] This appraisal holds good for Hasdrubal's conduct in northern Italy. His sharp attention to military anomalies is apparent in Livy's account of his perceptive deduction of the unexpected nocturnal arrival of a second Roman army under Claudius Nero from dust on their shields, the emaciated condition of men and the double bugle call which signalled the presence of not one but two consuls. Realizing his danger, Livy's Hasdrubal attempts to lead his army through unknown territory in the dark, but is thwarted by the desertion of his guides. Finding himself at dawn confronting two consular armies, Hasdrubal fights valiantly at the heart of the inevitable carnage, succumbing

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24 Plb. 1.62.3, 1.64.6, 2.1.7, 3.9.6–12.4. Cf. Liv. 21.1.3–2.2.

25 Plb. 3.76.8–10, 3.95.1–3; Liv. 21.22.1, 21.61.1–4, 23.26–27, 24.44.1.

to death with the reckless nobility of a Paulus or Flaminius. Almost all these details are retained by Silius who portrays Hasdrubal's decision to remove his army by night as dictated by shrewd military calculations rather than panic: *nec consulta fugae segni formidine differt* (Sil. 15.611). But the poet's intention is to construct Hasdrubal's campaign in Book 15 as a doomed version of Hannibal's victorious progress across northern Italy in *Punica* 4[26] and his decapitation at the River Metaurus marks another stage in the rise of Rome's fortunes after Cannae and her progress to victory at Zama.

In his epic narrative of the diminishing military success of the Carthaginians after Cannae Silius sets the second Barcid brother, now nearly 40, in poetic contrast with the 26 year old Scipio, supreme commander of the Roman armies in Spain, whose star is now rising meteorically.[27] Hasdrubal make his first appearance in Baecula in 208 BC, in a military camp adjacent to that of Scipio, following the Roman's breathtakingly swift conquest of New Carthage.[28] At this point Hasdrubal still aspires to emulate the mighty deeds of his brother (*fratris spirans ingentia facta*, 15.411),[29] for as governor of Carthaginian Iberia, he has won as much respect (*tanta maiestas*, 414) as his ferocious brother has inspired terror in Italy (*Hannibalis quantus Laurenti terror in ora*, 415). But Fate is against him. Ceremonially garbed to officiate at a Punic religious ritual celebrating the Foundation of Carthage, Hasdrubal's prayers for divine favour are abruptly interrupted by Scipio, launching what must be a nocturnal attack since sunrise follows in lines 439–440.[30] This unpropitious omen of his own forthcoming defeat is intimated by scenes embroidered on the Carthaginian's magnificent cloak which are proleptically significant for Scipio and Hasdrubal respectively. Jupiter's eagle, in gold thread, sweeping the child Ganymede heavenwards, is a symbol of apotheosis, hinting at the eventual triumph of Scipio. Meanwhile the

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26 See Marks (2005) 264 and n. 79, (2010) 146. Tipping (2010a) 43–44. For Hasdrubal as a 'double' of Hannibal see Augoustakis (2003) 111–112, 116, 119–120.

27 In the second half of the *Punica* the description *iuuenis* with its suggestions of ambition and vigour is applied more frequently to Scipio than to Hannibal who is meaningfully described as *iuuenis* for the last time when his ambition to sack Rome is checked by Jupiter (Sil. 10.366: *sat magna, o iuuenis, prensa est tibi gloria Cannis*). There are two exceptions to this (Sil. 11.371; 12.486); other later examples tend to allude to his past success (11.135; 12.199, 702; 15.527, 723; 17.352).

28 Sil. 15.400–409.

29 In a metaphorical sense, *spirare* with accusative signifies 'breathes the spirit of'. Cf. Sil. 15.411. Hasdrubal as *geminus Hannibal* is discussed in Augoustakis (2003).

30 Sil. 15.433–438. Punic rites were characteristically nocturnal and chthonic. See Littlewood (2013) 203–211.

depiction of Polyphemus, blood-stained and surrounded by human bones, as he eagerly grasps Odysseus' treacherously drugged goblet of wine foreshadows Hasdrubal's final deception and decapitation at the Metaurus.[31] In the skirmish which follows Scipio's sudden arrival the Carthaginian, who flees to the Pyrenees, ignominiously abandoning his troops to slaughter, is guilty of both cowardice and lack of concern for his men.[32]

Hasdrubal's subsequent crossing of the Alps awakens among the Romans new terror borne from past experience and the fear that a second Hannibal, *geminum Hannibalem*, will unite with the first to achieve a bloody conquest.[33] Rumour circulates that this younger brother might surpass the elder in his destruction of Rome, the one ambition that has eluded Hannibal:

> … uenisse superbo
> qui fratri certet cui maxima gloria cedat
> urbis deletae.
>
> Sil. 15.585–587

Again, however, the poet foreshadows Hasdrubal's coming defeat with portents and ominous literary allusions. In 208 BC Hannibal had successfully ambushed a Roman army in Apulia, killing both consuls, M. Claudius Marcellus and Ti. Quinctius Crispinus.[34] A reversal of this scenario annihilates Hasdrubal in the following year. While Rome quails at the prospect of two Hannibals united on Italian soil, an outraged *simulacrum* of Italia herself intervenes, urging the new consul C. Claudius Nero to undertake a swift but risky forced march north to join his colleague M. Livius Salinator. She convinces him with the promise that she herself has chosen the fields surrounding the Metaurus as the grave of Hasdrubal's army:

> … patulos regione Matauri
> damnaui tumulis Poenorum atque ossibus agros.
>
> Sil. 15.556–557

31 For differing interpretations of the scenes embroidered on the cloak of Hasdrubal see Ripoll (2000) 497–499, Harrison (2010) 290–292, Lovatt (2013) 185.

32 Sil. 15.471–474: *at non ductori Libyco par ardor in armis. / … / … nec caedes extremaue damna mouebant / agminis*.

33 Sil. 15.516–519. For Roman anxiety about Hasdrubal's invasion of Italy see Plb. 3.97.4. Mago's request after Cannae for further supplies (Sil. 11.536–541) had influenced the Carthaginian senate to order Hasdrubal to Italy (Liv. 23.27.9–10, 28.1–8, 29.16–17).

34 Sil. 15.343–398.

Hasdrubal's attempt to escape by night is obstructed by the vengeful Tellus Mater who confuses his army by circuitous paths until Dawn exposes them in full view of the two newly united consular armies.[35] Like the elder Scipiones in Spain in 212 BC, the Barcid brothers are now fatally disadvantaged by the separation of their armies. Hasdrubal valiantly exhorts his troops to prepare a spectacle of carnage to delight Hannibal when he arrives. But there is hubris in the ill-founded insult of senility with its undertones of Carthaginian cruelty which Hasdrubal aims at M. Livius Salinator.

> … ite, agite, oro,
> sternite ductorem, cum quo concurrere fratri
> sit pudor, et turpi finem donate senectae.
> Sil. 15.649–651

> Stir yourselves, I beg you, slaughter a general, with whom my brother would be ashamed to fight, and put an end to his unworthy old age.

From the opening imperatives with their hint of Punic diction Hasdrubal's speech ominously mirrors Hannibal's earlier misplaced denigration of Fabius as a deluded old fool at the head of a doddering army:

> … resides ad bella uocantur
> quis pudeat certare, senes. quodcumque uidetis,
> hoc reliquum est, primo damnatum ut inutile bello.
> Sil. 7.103–105

> Enlisted are decrepit old men recalled to the ranks with whom you would be ashamed to do battle. This remnant was rejected as unfit for service at the beginning of the war.

Miraculously transformed like the old Cunctator, the elderly consul Livius, glowing with renewed youth (*ceu prima reflorescente iuuenta*, 15.738), and triumphant in his enhanced stature (*ouans maior maiorque uideri*, 739), cuts a swathe through the Punic host in the image of the victor of Gerunium.[36] The glory of the Battle of the Metaurus is shared between the two Roman consuls. Claudius Nero kills Hasdrubal with his javelin, cutting short with a swift decapitation the gigantomachic impiety of his dying message to Hannibal:

35 Sil. 15.616–626.
36 Cf. Sil. 7.591–597.

... Capitolia uictor
exurat cinerique Iouis permisceat ossa
et cineres nostros.

Sil. 15.803–805

Let victorious Hannibal incinerate the Capitol and mingle my bones and ashes with those of Jupiter.

Hasdrubal's last words resonate with Statius' Capaneus' direct challenge to Jupiter to fling a thunderbolt at him as he mounts the walls of Thebes (*nunc totis in me conitere flammis*, *Theb*. 10.904–905). At the same time Nero's symbolic decapitation[37] of Hasdrubal and his gleeful exposure of the severed head evoke the literary model of Virgil's Nisus and Euryalus and the historical treatment of the heads of Pompey and Crassus.

The Metamorphosis of Mago

Whereas Silius tarnishes the historiographers' judgement of Hasdrubal, his Mago is consistently depicted in glowing terms, making no allusion to Livy's accounts of his cruelty in crucifying a group of senior magistrates in Spain[38] and his ill-timed quarrels with his brother after Hasdrubal's victory over the two elder Scipiones, which enabled their defeated armies to regroup north of the Ebro. In contrast to his Hasdrubal, whose future is shadowed by negative omens, Silius' Mago appears first as a daring hero comparable with the Iliadic Diomedes,[39] who distinguishes himself at the Trebia, Ticinus, and Lake Trasimene.[40] When Hannibal's youngest brother is introduced prior to these Carthaginian victories, Silius uses the same evocative verb, *spirare*, that he uses of Hasdrubal in Book 15, "aspiring to rival his brother in feats of arms". Leading an elite Carthaginian citizen contingent in Hannibal's vast army of mercenaries, Mago's superior rank is marked by the purple he wears and the chariot he drives while his delight in its noisy clatter reveals his youthful exuberance.

37 Verg. *A*. 9.465–467, 12.509–512, Luc. 8.679–686. On the motif of decapitation in Silius' *Punica* see Marpicati (1999), Augoustakis (2003), Marks (2008), Tipping (2010a) 43–44.

38 Liv. 21.54, 28.37.1–2, 25.32–39.

39 Sil. 7.291–293. See Littlewood (2011) 134.

40 Liv. 21.54. Cf. Plb. 3.71. See also Mago at the Ticinus, Sil. 4.311–330, the Trebia, 4.562–572, and Lake Trasimene, 5.302–376.

> his rector fulgens ostro super altior omnes
> germanus nitet Hannibalis gratoque tumultu
> Mago quatit currus et fratrem spirat in armis.
>
> Sil. 3.238–240

> Hannibal's brother led the Carthaginian contingent. Blazing with purple, Mago stood head and shoulders above the rest as he drove along in his chariot, delighting in its rumble and flaunting his resemblance to his brother.

In three separate scenes Silius focuses respectively on Mago's unquestioning loyalty, his military daring and finally his dignity and self-assurance as Hannibal's ambassador before the Carthaginian senate. In *Punica* 7 Hannibal confides in his brother his fury at being trapped by Fabius in the Ager Falernus and reveals his plans for a night-raid. When the brothers go to find the officers who will put Hannibal's plan into effect, Mago's unquestioning unanimity with Hannibal is underlined in the expression *gemino … gressu* (321).[41] Hannibal stands aloof while his brother delivers his orders curtly and almost verbatim to the young Maraxes before explaining their *rationale* to the more senior Acherras. Finally, to show absolute solidarity with Hannibal's personal grievance (*in curas Fabius nos excitat*, "Fabius keeps me awake with worry", 306), Mago concludes with a joke at the Roman's expense (*hic Fabio persuadeat astus non certare dolis*, "Let our ruse persuade Fabius not to vie with us in trickery!" 336–337).

Mago reveals his full maturity and potential for responsibility a year later in Book 10 directly after the Battle of Cannae. Here the poet alters the historiographic version, substituting Mago for the cavalry commander Maharbal, in order to develop his poetic metamorphosis of Mago.[42] Changing the mood of Livy's anecdote from good humour to fraternal tension, he initiates open anger between the brothers in ominous contrast with Mago's earlier unquestioning loyalty.[43]

> quos inter motus somni uanosque tumultus
> dedita per noctem reliquo cum milite castra
> nuntiat et praedam pleno trahit agmine Mago.

41 On unanimity between sisters in Flavian epic see Keith and Manioti in this volume.

42 Liv. 22.51.1–4.

43 Sil. 7.290–337.

huic ductor laetas Tarpeio uertice mensas
spondenti, cum quinta diem nox orbe tulisset,
celatis superum monitis clausoque pauore
uulnera et exhaustas saeuo certamine uires
ac nimium laetis excusat fidere rebus.
tum spe deiectus iuuenis, ceu uertere ab ipsis
terga iuberetur muris ac signa referre,
'tanta mole' inquit 'non Roma, ut creditur, ipsa,
Varro est uictus. quonam tam prospera Martis
munera destituis fato patriamque moraris? …'

Sil. 10.372–384

Into the turmoil and unsubstantial terrors of Hannibal's sleep came Mago to announce that the camp had surrendered during the night with the rest of the army and he brought with him booty in large quantities. When he promised that within five days the general would be feasting on the Tarpeian Rock, Hannibal prevaricated, while concealing Jupiter's warning and suppressing his fears; he offered as excuses the soldiers' wounds and exhaustion after fierce fighting and their being over-confident in the hour of triumph. Then Mago exploded, as much downcast as if he had been ordered to withdraw his army from the very walls of Rome, "With such a mighty effort Rome herself has not been conquered, as people think, but only Varro. Through what quirk of fate do you walk away from such generous rewards of war and keep your country waiting? …"

Mago is unaware that his brother is still reeling from his vision of Jupiter thundering that Hannibal will never conquer Rome. Up to this point the brothers have been unanimous in believing that the capture of Rome and the gigantomachic destruction of Jupiter's Capitoline temple should follow victory at Cannae. Hannibal himself had planned, no less eagerly than Mago, to march straight from Cannae to Rome (335–336). Now the fire has gone out of his resolve and he dare not admit to superstitious terror, even to his brother. Heaping contempt on Hannibal's excuses, Mago observes caustically that their victory at Cannae has achieved only the conquest of Varro. He emerges from the quarrel the stronger of the two brothers and this disagreement within the Carthaginian high command reiterates a sinister constant of Flavian epic: the destructive nature of fraternal conflict.

The tension created between the brothers in Book 10 is subtly accentuated by the contrast which they present when each reappears in Book 11. While

Hannibal and his victorious armies are gradually emasculated through the winter months in Capua by an enervating sequence of all night banquets, titillating entertainments and erotic diversions, Mago, like the young Scipio when he leaves for Africa, appears to have taken responsibility for the war, superseding Hannibal as Silius' Scipio eclipses Fabius Maximus at the end of Book 16. At this point in the epic narrative, Mago appears the strongest and most meritorious of the three Barcid brothers. With a self-assurance beyond his 25 years and unsullied by doubts of Carthage's ultimate victory, he negotiates with the Carthaginian senate on behalf of his brother.[44] In his vivid narrative of the Carthaginian victory Mago praises Hannibal as the greatest general the world has ever seen,[45] but emphasizes his own presence at the heart of the battle with a triumphant tricolon: *uidi … uidi … uidi* (11.521–526). In contemptuous defiance of fierce opposition from the Barcids' enemy, Hanno, Mago demands a final consignment of mercenaries and elephants, assuring the senate that the destruction of Rome is imminent:

> … restat nunc sedibus imis
> uertenda atque aequanda sola iam subruta Roma.
> annitamur.
>
> Sil. 11.536–538

> Rome now has only to be uprooted from her foundations and levelled with the earth. Let us strain our sinews in the (final) effort!

The poet leaves his unquenchable Mago at the peak of his career, omitting all mention of his return to Italy in 206 BC, of his fatal wound in Cisalpine Gaul and his death on a troopship taking him home to Carthage, a full year before the battle of Zama in autumn 202 BC.[46] Following the decapitation of Hasdrubal in Book 15, the ignominious flight of the once heroic Mago at the beginning of Book 16 contributes to the narrative of Carthage's decline in the final books of the *Punica*.[47]

44 Liv. 23.11.7–13.8.

45 Sil. 11.520–521: *ductor quo numquam maiorem ad bella tulerunt / rectorem terrae.*

46 Liv. 30.19.5.

47 Cf. Liv. 29.3.15: *nec Magonem ex Gallia mouere tumultus quicquam nec coniungere sese Hannibalem ipsum iam et fama senescere et uiribus.*

Flavian Echoes

In the epics of Valerius and Silius a wise and omnipotent Jupiter unfolds a divine plan in which Rome's worthiness for world dominion will be put to the test, her imperial ambitions will be rewarded and her warrior leaders rewarded by apotheosis.[48] In both epics imperialist ambition, conquest and family *pietas* are components of epic heroism. In praising the achievements of each member of the Flavian dynasty both Valerius and Silius allude to the extent of Vespasian's empire, Titus' successful conquest of Jerusalem and Domitian's loyalty to his family and surpassing military glory.[49] The reestablishment of peace and prosperity after the civil war of 69 stimulated Vespasian's imperial expansion. It was a facet of Flavian foreign policy indirectly present in Valerius' voyage of the Argo[50] and more specifically in the arguments of Silius' Scipio when he extols the virtues of Roman imperialism to the more conservative Fabius.[51]

The historiographers represent the struggle that ensued as a war of imperialism between two republics anxious to dominate Mediterranean politics and trade. As a subject for Flavian epic, it had natural appeal.[52] There was, however, another theme which invited contemporary scrutiny and interpretation: comparisons intimated between the Flavian dynasty, Vespasian, Titus and Domitian, and the two dynastic triads of Silius' *Punica*.[53] When Silius celebrates Vespasian and his two sons as *bellatrix gens* in *Punica* 3,[54] his description is equally apt for the three Scipiones and the Barcids. Jupiter describes Hannibal as dominating the struggle with Rome for 16 years: *primus … humani generis* (17.354–355). Vespasian's military primacy extended almost as long if measured from 66, when he took over the disgraced Corbulo's three legions in Judaea, until his death in 79. The poet who celebrates the extent of Vespasian's empire,[55] also credits Hannibal with the intention of freeing Carthage from the imperial restrictions imposed on her at the end of the First Punic War.[56]

48 V. Fl. 1.556–560, Sil. 3.571–596.

49 V. Fl. 1.7–21, Sil. 3.595–629. For bibliography of recent interpretations of these passages see Stover (2012) 67 n. 130.

50 On this see Stover (2012) 26–77.

51 Sil. 16.645–700. See also Weinstock (1971) 148–152.

52 See Stover (2012).

53 On Valerius' presentation of epic families as reflecting concerns of the Flavian dynasty see Stover in this volume.

54 Sil. 3.596.

55 Sil. 3.597–600.

56 Sil. 1.60–62. Cf. 3.85, *calcato foedere*.

From his accession Vespasian shared his imperial duties with his elder son. They had campaigned together in the East, had both been acclaimed *imperator* and had shared a joint triumph in 71, in which year Titus became co-regent with Vespasian. Their mutually cooperative tenure of the imperial office has affinities with Hasdrubal's governorship of Spain while Hannibal campaigned in Italy and with the joint campaign of the two elder Scipiones. Threatened by the combined military forces and military prowess of two Barcids when Hasdrubal crossed the Alps in 207 BC, the Italians, according to Silius, experienced greater terror than they had when Hannibal invaded in 218 BC, calling Hasdrubal *geminum Hannibalem* who would vie with his brother in wiping Rome off the map.[57] Observing the approach of their united legions the Judaeans might equally have described Titus as "Vespasian's double" or "rivalling his haughty father". Despite his formidable reputation and military acuity, misfortune shadows Silius' Hasdrubal from the proleptic ecphrasis of his ominously embroidered cloak in Spain to his decapitation at the River Metaurus. He shares with Titus not only the misfortune of a premature death but a reputation marred by ruthlessness towards potentially dangerous enemies.[58] There would be no substance in the suggestion that Silius aligns Titus with the less fortunate Hasdrubal if it were not for the poet's idealizing transformation of Mago. Consistently loyal and surpassingly valiant, the youngest Barcid, deputizing for his brother on his mission to Carthage after Cannae, seems poised to eclipse Hannibal himself. Might we perhaps construe the analogy as a playful literary compliment aimed to please the third and youngest of Rome's Flavian rulers, in the same spirit as Silius reconstructs the Judgement of Paris to privilege Domitian's favourite deity and guardian spirit, Minerva.[59]

Imperial expansion in the Flavian period had engendered a broader spirit of intellectual enquiry. This is evident in the scope of Pliny's *Natural History* which ranges over the anthropology, zoology, culture and geography of the known world. In such an intellectual climate a poet might balance national differences and long-standing ethnic stereotypes, such as Carthaginian cruelty and perfidy, with a psychological exploration of paternal and filial devotion and fraternal rivalry.[60] From the literary point of view, it is pertinent that the three Scipiones are consistently united in their essentially paternal and filial

57 Sil. 15.586–587.

58 Levick (1999) 192–203.

59 Sil. 7.409–493. On this see Littlewood (2013).

60 Pliny the Elder reveals his interest in psychology in Flavian Rome in his discussion of portraiture, *Nat.* 35.2–7.

relationship, a model of Roman *pietas*, whereas unity or division in the fraternal relationship of the three Barcids follows the rise and decline of Carthaginian military fortunes in the *Makrostruktur* of the *Punica*.

Mago's absolute loyalty to his brother, his military distinction and the regal dignity with which he discharges his mission as Hannibal's ambassador have all been discussed above. It is evident from the Flavian poets that from the time of his accession Domitian wished to be represented as having possessed all these qualities. Martial underlines Domitian's fraternal loyalty in accepting third place in the Flavian dynastic hierarchy,[61] tactfully camouflaging the fact that Domitian had often shown resentment that Titus was consistently given precedence during Vespasian's reign.[62] Although his military record was conspicuously less illustrious than the successful campaigns of his two predecessors, Silius hails Domitian unequivocally as surpassing both Vespasian and Titus in military glory: *at tu transcendes, Germanice, facta tuorum* (3.607).[63] Attributing to destiny Domitian's escape from the Vitellians when they fired the Capitol in 69,[64] he implicitly contrasts Hannibal's gigantomachic ambition to destroy Jupiter's Capitoline temple with Domitian's pious reconstruction after the conflagration of 69:

> aurea Tarpeia ponet Capitolia rupe
> et iunget nostro templorum culmina caelo.
> Sil. 3.623–624

> On the Tarpeian crag he will set a golden Capitoline (temple) and unite the roof of the temple with our heavenly domain.

A Flavian model of heroism and *pietas*, Silius' Domitian will be rewarded upon apotheosis by his gratified predecessors who will set him between them on Romulus' throne.[65] In the light of the courtly compliments and whimsical humour inserted in the *Punica*, is it not possible for Silius to have have reconstructed Mago's character as an illustration that the third and youngest member

61 Mart. 9.101. Cf. Mart. 5.5.7. But see Cancellaria relief where not Titus but Domitian supports the new emperor Vespasian at his inauguration. See Darwall-Smith (1996) 145–150, Levick (1999) 190, Newlands (2002) 14–15.

62 Levick (1999) 188–191.

63 Cf. Stat. *Silu*. 1.1.7, 79–81.

64 Tac. *Hist*. 3.59–86; Suet. *Dom*. 1; Sil. 3.609–610: *ne te terruerint Tarpei culminis ignes / sacrilegas inter flammas seruabere terris*. On this see Chaudhuri (2014) 233–243.

65 Sil. 3.626–628.

of a triadic family group might be the most worthy, valiant and regally gifted? Mago is, nevertheless, an enemy of Rome. Silius' final thought on the subject is expressed with elegance and wit in the context of young Scipio's reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula when Mago, now barely recognizable in defeat, appears for the last time. At this moment the poet presents a striking contrast between the third and youngest members of the Barcid and Scipionic dynasty, the fugitive Carthaginian and his triumphant Roman coeval:

> iam Mago, exutus castris, agitante pauore
> in Libyam propero tramisit caerula uelo.
> ecce aliud decus, haud uno contenta fauore,
> nutribat Fortuna duci.
>
> Sil. 16.26–29

> Mago now, bereft of his army and assailed by fear, fled in haste across the sea to Libya. Meanwhile Fortune, not content with a single gift, was preparing further glory for the Roman leader.

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Mutua uulnera: Dying Together in Silius' Saguntum*

Neil Bernstein

A recent collection speaks of the Roman people as "citizens of discord,"[1] who in the view of Augustine should have erected a temple to this goddess instead of to Concordia. Rome experienced four major civil wars in the first centuries BC and AD: between Marius and Sulla, Caesar and Pompey, Octavian and Antony, and between the four contenders for the throne in the long year of 69. Amid these major episodes of war, there was also a series of minor conflicts, including the failed Catilinarian revolution, the various plots against Augustus, Scribonianus' revolt against Claudius in 42 AD, and the uprising of Saturninus against Domitian in 89 AD. The effects of the constant threat of violence in the state are immediately visible in the genre of Roman epic. The poets both react to and shape perceptions of civil war through a foundational nexus of associations between civil war, mass suicide, hostile divine intervention, and murder in the nuclear family.

The first part of this paper briefly traces the epic tradition of representation of scenes of violence in the family. Family members murder one another, or join one another in suicide, in each of the three major Flavian epics. They make literal the representation of civil war in the Augustan epics and Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* as a "battle between brothers". These episodes of family violence have been read in generic terms, as negative images of the family that self-consciously contrast with the typically positive image in Homeric and Virgilian epic.[2] They have also been read in historicizing terms, as responses to imperial power and to the civil war that brought the Flavian dynasty to power.[3]

The major section of the paper focuses on a virtuoso set piece from Silius Italicus' *Punica*, the mass suicide of the people of Saguntum led by the goddess

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1 See Breed, Damon, and Rossi (2010). On discord as a characteristic of marital bonds in Statius' *Thebaid* see Newlands in this volume.

2 See Bernstein (2008).

3 See Zissos (2009) and McGuire (1997).

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Fides and the Fury Tisiphone.[4] Silius displays considerable sophistication in adapting the themes of his predecessors, and creates a unique, fully independent conception of an historical event long remembered in exemplary tradition.[5] My reading of this scene is based on research for a commentary which I am currently preparing on Book 2 of the *Punica*. I set my reading in dialogue with recent work by Raymond Marks, who has argued that Silius' choice of an historical subject in general is a deliberate rejection of the mythological focus of his contemporaries' work, and that the Saguntum episode in particular responds to the civil war narrative of Statius' *Thebaid*.[6] The multiple clashes between the episode's narrative, intertextual, and ideological levels call the exemplarity of the Saguntine suicide into question. I argue that Silius engages with the epic tradition of family violence, for the purposes of differentiating, in ascending order of generality:

a) his version of the Saguntine suicide, both from its own exemplary tradition and from family murder/suicide in other epics;
b) his representation of suicide and civil war from other epics; and
c) his mythicized history from the mythological epics of his contemporaries.

Backgrounds

The scene between Virgil's Juno and Allecto introduces the elements of hostile divine intervention and violence within the family. Juno's hymnic enumeration of Allecto's abilities includes her creation of violence between "brothers who love one another" and "turning a house against itself in hatred":

tu potes unanimos armare in proelia fratres
atque odiis uersare domos, tu uerbera tectis
funereasque inferre faces, tibi nomina mille,
mille nocendi artes. fecundum concute pectus,
dissice compositam pacem, sere crimina belli;
arma uelit poscatque simul rapiatque iuuentus.

Verg. *A*. 7.335–340

4 On the Saguntine episode see also Augoustakis in this volume.
5 On Roman exemplarity, see Seo (2013), Roller (2004), and Litchfield (1914).
6 See Marks (2014), Marks (2013), and Marks (2010).

> You can take brothers who love each other and set them at each others' throats. You can turn a house against itself in hatred and fill it with whips and funeral torches. You have a thousand names and a thousand ways of causing hurt. Your heart is teeming with them. Shake them all out. Shatter this peace they have agreed between them and sow the seeds of recrimination and war. Make their young men long for weapons, demand them, seize them! (tr. West)

Ovid's scene of Cadmus' foundation of Thebes literalizes the metaphor of civil war as a battle between the earthborn brothers that grow up in response to Cadmus' sowing of the dragon's teeth. The brief episode of spontaneous violence that claims the lives of all but a few of the *terrigenae* is also the first combination of the civil war and mass suicide themes:[7]

> 'ne cape!' de populo, quem terra creauerat, unus
> exclamat 'nec te ciuilibus insere bellis!'
> atque ita terrigenis rigido de fratribus unum
> comminus ense ferit, iaculo cadit eminus ipse;
> hunc quoque qui leto dederat, non longius illo
> uiuit et exspirat, modo quas acceperat auras,
> exemploque pari furit omnis turba, suoque
> Marte cadunt subiti per mutua uulnera fratres.
>
> Ov. *Met.* 3.116–123

> "Take not your arms," one of the earth-sprung brood cried out, "and take no part in our fratricidal strife." So saying, with his hard sword he clave one of his earth-born brothers, fighting hand to hand; and instantly he himself was felled by a javelin thrown from far. But he also who had slain this last had no longer to live than his victim, and breathed forth the spirit which he had but now received. The same dire madness raged in them all, and in mutual strife by mutual wounds these brothers of an hour perished.
>
> tr. MILLER

Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile* engages with the association between civil war and suicide from its opening description of the Roman people "turning its victorious hand on its own guts".[8] The narrator deplores the conspicuous absence of the

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7 See Hardie (1990).

8 Luc. 1.2–3 *populumque potentem / in sua uictrici conuersum uiscera dextra.*

gods from the world, most notably in his lament at the battle of Pharsalus. The epic instead redistributes among the characters some of the gods' traditional narrative functions as instigators of civil war and kin murder. Thus the ghost of Caesar's daughter Julia becomes the Fury who pursues the remarried Pompey in his dreams and promises that civil war will make him hers again.[9] Laelius' promise to murder his family at Caesar's command is testament to the general's godlike power over his followers. The violence that would normally have been caused by madness implanted by a Fury or hostile goddess has here been voluntarily offered in service to the tyrant:

> nec ciuis meus est, in quem tua classica, Caesar,
> audiero. per signa decem felicia castris
> perque tuos iuro quocumque ex hoste triumphos,
> pectore si fratris gladium iuguloque parentis
> condere me iubeas plenaeque in uiscera partu
> coniugis, inuita peragam tamen omnia dextra.
>
> Luc. 1.373–378

> If I hear your trumpet sound the charge against any man, he is no countryman of mine. By your standards, victorious in ten campaigns, and by your triumphs I swear, whoever be the foe whom you triumph over—if you bid me bury my sword in my brother's breast or my father's throat or the body of my teeming wife, I will perform it all, even if my hand be reluctant.
>
> tr. DUFF

Lucan's episode of the fatal bark of the Opitergians recombines the themes of civil war and mass suicide found in Ovid's Cadmus episode, but inverts many of the familiar categories associated with them. Though they are involved in a civil war, the Opitergians are all on the same side. They engage in their mass suicide without the divine instigation found in Ovid or the Flavian epics. Their motive for suicide is to avoid humiliating capture, a major theme of Roman exemplary discourse and a reality of the civil war. Though it is not narrated directly in the *Bellum Ciuile*, the example of Cato's famous suicide stands behind such thinking.[10] The uninspiring contrast to such exemplary deeds is Domitius' craven acceptance of the poisoned gift of Caesar's *clementia* as he

9 Luc. 3.11 *furialis*; Luc. 3.33–34 *bellum / te faciet ciuile meum.*

10 See Goar (1987).

surrenders his troops at Corfinium.[11] The episode of the Opitergians' suicide features a similar clash between noble aspiration and grubby "historical reality" (however idealized that "reality" has become in Lucan's version). Vulteius, the troops' leader, attempts to identify their suicide as exemplary (Luc. 4.496–497).[12] Yet the narrator soon after condemns the action, even as he relates it, as an instance of maddened fratricide (Luc. 4.549–565).[13] The juxtaposition of Vulteius' noble *sententiae* with the narrator's histrionic condemnation does not necessarily produce an irresoluble contradiction. Both speakers correctly characterize some aspects of the event. Mass suicide to avoid capture can be both exemplary in its intentions and yet appear like madness in its enactment, particularly to an observer like Lucan's narrator. The divergent focalization of the scene is characteristic of the "fractured voice" that narrates the *Bellum Ciuile*. One crucial difference in the subsequent Flavian epics is that we know the family murderers are mad because we have seen divine agents madden them.

Valerius' *Argonautica* both returns civil war to the royal house, as in the latter half of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and continues to present its effects on the world stage, as in Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*. The world of the Roman *Argonautica* has almost no genuinely peaceful societies: if violence is not actually taking place, then it has likely been suppressed through threat of force. The poet's addition to the Argonautic tradition, the "hot" civil war at Colchis between Aeetes and his brother Perses, takes place around two "cold" civil wars, the deferred conflict over the throne of Iolcus and the suppressed revolt against Jupiter's reign over Olympus.[14] Two further episodes of violence among friends and families, civil wars in all but name, punctuate the Argonauts' journey to Colchis: the night-time battle between guest and host at Cyzicus and the massacre of the Lemnian men by their wives. Such scenes of violence between actors who should be friends serve as analogues to civil war and make concrete the characteristic metaphors for representing civil war. Valerius' loose episodic structure enables him to narrate variations on the civil war theme that had not been explored in previous epic. Violence here occurs between spouses, who are not the typical kin murders in the epic genre (tragedy is their usual venue), and between guest and host, people who are not required to resolve their differences and live together after violence like the opposed factions of a civil conflict.

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11 See Fantham (1992) on Luc. 2.478–525 and Sklenár (2003) 128–152.

12 See Hill (2004) 217 on Lucan's "identification of ethical exemplarity with self-destructive frenzy".

13 See Day (2013) 195–196 and Eldred (2002).

14 See Bernstein (2014).

During their voyage, the Argonauts enjoy the hospitality of king Cyzicus, and join hands with him as friends and allies. Divine compulsion returns as the motivator of action, however: the goddess Cybele makes the Argonauts the instruments of her revenge on the king for killing one of her favorite animals. She compels the Argonauts to return to Cyzicus' eponymous kingdom by night and unknowingly slaughter both him and their former hosts (V. Fl. 3.15–273).[15] Their motivation is neither madness nor vengeance but divinely implanted ignorance, and the guilt they experience afterwards nearly paralyzes the voyage (V. Fl. 3.362–376). Their guilt genuinely stops the Argonauts from proceeding, and the elaborate rituals of expiation that follow appear to be efficacious. The emphasis on guilt and expiation in this episode reverses the behavior of Lucan's Caesarians after Pharsalus. Caesar's men are momentarily troubled by guilty dreams of the fellow citizens they killed (Luc. 7.760–780), but instead of expiating their crime permit their commander to leave the corpses unburied (Luc. 7.781–824). The uniquely successful expiation in Valerius' *Argonautica* contrasts with other Roman epic civil war narratives, where the stain of civil war guilt is indelible and generally leads to future conflict.

A similar effort at recovery, if not reconciliation, occurs during the Argonauts' visit to Lemnos. The motivators of the massacre are entirely familiar from preceding tradition: Venus' divine compulsion maddens the women and causes them to kill their returning husbands:[16]

> hoc soror, hoc coniunx, propiorque hoc nata parensque
> saeua ualet prensosque toris mactatque trahitque
> femineum genus, immanes quos sternere Bessi
> nec Geticae potuere manus aut aequoris irae.
> hic cruor in thalamis et anhela in pectore fumant
> uulnera, seque toris misero luctamine trunci
> deuoluunt. diras aliae ad fastigia taedas
> iniciunt abduntque domos pars ignibus atris.
> effugiunt propere sed dura in limine coniunx
> obsidet et uiso repetunt incendia ferro.
>
> V. Fl. 2.229–238

15 See Stover (2012) 113–149.

16 See Elm von der Osten (2007). On the Lemnian episode see also Augoustakis, Heslin and Stocks in this volume.

> Such the savagery of sister, of wife, aye, of closer of kin, of daughter and of mother; caught in their beds woman drags forth and butchers the men whom neither the huge Bessi nor the Getic armies nor the anger of the sea could overcome. Blood flows in the chambers, while in every breast there is a bubbling, smoking wound, and struggling pitifully the bodies roll from their beds. Some of the women hurl torches of destruction upon the roofs and add their homes to the ruin; some few men make haste to escape from the smoking fires, but their way is barred at the threshold by an unyielding wife, and at the sight of the sword they rush back into the flames.
>
> tr. MOZLEY

Valerius' narrator claims to tell the story of the massacre against his will, recalling thereby the "fractured voice" of Lucan's narrator who protests against his obligation to narrate the violence of Pharsalus (V. Fl. 2.216–219). For the narrator, Hypsipyle's rescue of her father is the exemplary deed to be remembered (V. Fl. 2.242–246), and so the epic locates exemplarity not in the commission of violence but in its preclusion. Since no men but Thoas remain alive, we cannot properly speak of reconciliation after civil war. The society at least experiences a form of recovery as the Argonauts' enthusiastic stud service leads to its eventual repopulation with males. Statius' version of the Lemnian episode undoes such perceptions of recovery.[17] Hypsipyle as narrator instead calls attention to the negative consequences of her "crime" of concealing her father while her subjects massacred theirs.[18] Discovery of the queen's good fortune leads her jealous subjects to send her into exile. Reconciliation takes place not on the political level, for that is impossible in Statius' world, but on the personal level. Hypsipyle regains her children even as her negligence leads to her mistress Eurydice losing hers.

In Ovid's Cadmus episode, the survivors of the spontaneous violence between the *terrigenae* become the first citizens of Thebes, a city that like Rome has civil war written into its origin story.[19] Statius exploits the theme of originary violence in his episode of Menoeceus' suicide in response to Tiresias' oracle demanding the sacrifice of one of the descendants of the dragon's teeth. Once more a divine agent, this time the personification of Virtus, deceives the actor as to the context and meaning of his actions. Menoceus' suicide does

17 See Gibson (2004).

18 See Bernstein (2013).

19 See Bernstein (2008) 171–179.

not provide the effective contribution to the city's defense that the Thebans prayed for. In addition, Virtus puts Menoeceus' putatively selfless suicide on behalf of his city in the context of fraternal conflict, urging him to kill himself before his brother Haemon does. As with so much heroic action in the *Thebaid*, Menoeceus' suicide would have been exemplary, had motivation and circumstances not been sadistically combined to deprive it of such a status.[20] The major civil war narrative of the *Thebaid* is the conflict between the Theban brothers Eteocles and Polynices over their father's throne. The narrative self-consciously defers their duel until a penultimate moment that recalls the Iliadic duel of Achilles and Hector rather than the *Aeneid*'s concluding duel of Aeneas and Turnus. The narrative attempts to make the duel an occluded *exemplum*, instructive only to kings rather than the epic's wide readership.[21]

This brief and schematic review of epic scenes of family violence has presented some of the variations that can be played on the traditional metaphor of the state as a family. Each successive representation of murder in the family draws narrative strength from its evocation of its predecessors in the genre. Madness and divine intervention become crucial elements in this tradition: only Lucan seems able to accept the disenchanted notion that people might act in this way without any form of external compulsion. Characters can still perform heroic deeds even in this context of divine compulsion, but such foreclosure of their agency typically compromises both the practical efficacy and moral evaluation of their deeds. Silius' Saguntum episode demonstrates full awareness of the connection between divine compulsion and compromised exemplarity. It is to his complex, self-conscious, and sophisticated response to epic and exemplary tradition that I now turn.

The Mass Suicide at Saguntum in Silius' Punica

Hercules, the divine companion of Saguntum's founder Zacynthus, petitions Fides as he views the plague and famine resulting from the prolonged Carthaginian siege.[22] Fides' response in Silius echoes the Virgilian Jupiter's response to Hercules' tears at the prospect of Pallas' death. She turns the famous sententia *stat sua cuique dies* ("his day stands for each man") to refer to "the day of vengeance" that stands for Hannibal.[23] This day will come much later for

20 See Bernstein (2013), Heinrich (1999), and Ganiban (2007) 136–145.

21 See Ganiban (2007) 176–206, Bernstein (2004), and Georgacopoulou (1998).

22 See Asso (2010) and Tipping (2010).

23 Verg. *A*. 10.46 ~ Sil. 2.495 *statque dies ausis olim tam tristibus ultor*.

Hannibal than it does for Virgil's Turnus, decades after the fall of Saguntum. The effect of the adaptation is to emphasize the difference between human and divine time scales. The gods know that vengeance will come eventually, but in the short term the Saguntines perceive only the destruction of their city.

Where the Virgilian Jupiter merely averts his gaze from Pallas' death, Silius' personified Fides intervenes on behalf of the Saguntines. Fides' descent to Saguntum actualizes the metaphor of the city's loyalty to Rome, as seen in Valerius Maximus' exemplary notice into interaction between human and divine agents:[24]

> 1. post duorum in Hispania Scipionum totidemque Romani sanguinis exercituum miserabilem stragem Saguntini uictricibus Hannibalis armis intra moenia urbis suae conpulsi, cum uim Punicam ulterius nequirent arcere, collatis in forum quae unicuique erant carissima atque undique circumdatis accensisque ignis nutrimentis, ne a societate nostra desciscerent, publico et communi rogo semet ipsi superiecerunt. crediderim tunc ipsam Fidem humana negotia speculantem maestum gessisse uultum, perseuerantissimum sui cultum iniquae fortunae iudicio tam acerbo exitu damnatum cernentem. 2. idem praestando Petelini eundem laudis honorem meruerunt …
>
> V. Max. 6.6.ext.

> After the pitiable slaughter of the two Scipios in Spain and as many armies of Roman race, the Saguntines were driven by Hannibal's victorious arms inside the walls of their city. Unable to fend off the Punic power any longer, they collected into their forum all that each one of them held dearest and set inflammable substances around and ignited them. Then, rather than defect from our alliance, they threw themselves on top of the public and communal pyre. I could believe that Faith herself on that occasion watching the affairs of men wore a face of sorrow as she saw her most persevering cult condemned by judgment of unkind Fortune in so bitter an outcome.
>
> By the same performance the people of Petelia earned a like honorable acclaim …
>
> tr. SHACKLETON BAILEY

24 The examples of Pietas and Virtus as "actants" in Statius' text are broadly comparable. See Franchet d'Espèrey (1996).

The attribution of a personality to the divine quality Fides further evokes its/her cult worship in the world outside the text.[25] The Saguntine commitment to Rome is no longer simply an inert *factum memorabile* but the kind of behavior that exemplifies the action of Fides herself. Yet Silius immediately complicates the simple equation of the Saguntines with a single virtue by creating an ambiguous portrait of Fides, and by introducing a second divine agent, the Fury Tisiphone, as her opponent.[26]

Following Fides is no straightforward path to virtue. She inspires the besieged Saguntines to take up arms against the Carthaginian invaders—but must immediately restrain them from engaging in cannibalism (Sil. 2.513–525). A later scene at Capua in *Punica* 13 recapitulates both the language and the theme of Fides' intervention: the Romans are about to destroy the treacherous city until Pan restrains them (Sil. 13.315–320). In both scenes, Silius' apparently benevolent gods attempt to keep violence within proper boundaries, and do so in the context of idealized interstate relations. Fides endeavors to guide the Saguntines to exemplary death through heroic resistance and so restrains their initial impulse to act like beasts.[27] Pan guides the Romans to exact a limited form of retribution upon their disloyal Capuan allies while keeping them from acquiring a reputation for brutality.[28] Juno then observes Fides' work and attributes it to "the virgin's madness that stirs up war".[29] Through Juno's comment, Silius consciously draws attention to the association between Fides' actions, the Fury Tisiphone's *furor*, and the *furor* that epic generically associates with civil war. The phrase specifically evokes the appeal of Lucan's Massilians to their *fides* that pairs them with the Saguntines:[30]

> et post translatas exustae Phocidos arces
> moenibus exiguis alieno in litore tuti,
> inlustrat quos sola fides ...
> nec pauet hic populus pro libertate subire
> obsessum Poeno gessit quae Marte Saguntum.
> pectoribus rapti matrum frustraque trahentes

25 See Clark (2007) 167–170.

26 Contrast Feeney (1991) 301–312.

27 Sil. 2.522–523 *uel leto grauiora pati saeuasque ferarum / attemptare dapes et mensis addere crimen.*

28 See Bernstein (2009).

29 Sil. 2.528 *uirgineum increpitat miscentem bella furorem.*

30 See also the Bacchant's description of Roman civil war as *furor*: Luc. 1.681–682 *quis furor hic, o Phoebe, doce, quo tela manusque / Romanae miscent acies bellumque sine hoste est.*

ubera sicca fame medios mittentur in ignis
uxor et a caro poscet sibi fata marito,
uolnera miscebunt fratres bellumque coacti
hoc potius ciuile gerent.

Luc. 3.340–342, 349–355

Driven from the ancient seat of our nation, when Phocis was burnt down and her towers were removed, we dwell on a foreign shore and owe our safety to narrow walls; and our only glory is our fidelity … In defence of freedom we do not shrink from sufferings that were bravely borne by Saguntum when beset by the army of Carthage. Our infants, torn from their mothers' arms and tugging in vain at breasts dry with famine, shall be hurled into the midst of the flames; wives shall seek death at the hands of loved husbands; brother shall exchange wounds with brother, and shall choose, if driven to it, that form of civil war.

tr. DUFF

After the ambiguous presentation of Fides' intervention, Tisiphone's assault quickly supersedes the intervention's effect.[31] Silius' decision to make Tisiphone's maddening of the Saguntines the cause of the mass murder/suicide establishes deliberate contrasts with the other acts of familial violence in epic. A vengeful Venus provokes the Lemnian massacre in Valerius' *Argonautica* and Statius' *Thebaid*, and Lucan's Opitergians undertake their suicide without divine intervention.[32] The Capuan episode offers a further point of contrast: Pan's calming of the vengeful Romans inverts Tisiphone's maddening of the Saguntines (Sil. 13.314–325). The fall of Saguntum, the climactic scene of the *Punica*'s opening set-piece, also enters into an extensive dialogue with the duel of Eteocles and Polynices, the long-deferred anti-climax of the *Thebaid*.

Epic Interaction

The contest between the Fury and a personified virtue sets the episode in dialogue with the brothers' duel in Statius. I present the evidence in tabular form:

31 See Küppers (1986) 164–170.

32 On the vengeful Venus, see Elm von der Osten (2007). On Lucan's Opitergians, see Eldred (2002).

A. Hercules accuses Fides: Sil. 2.488–489:
et tot pendentem pro te, dea, cernere poenas
urbem **lenta** potes?

Tisiphone accuses her sister: *Theb.* 11.97–101:
non solitas acies nec Martia bella paramus,
sed fratrum (licet alma **Fides** Pietasque repugnent,
uincentur), fratrum stringendi comminus enses.
grande opus! ipsae odiis, ipsae discordibus armis
aptemur. quid **lenta** uenis?

B. The Saguntines' noble work: Sil. 2.612–613:
inde **opus aggressi** toto quod **nobile** mundo
aeternum inuictis infelix gloria seruat.

C. The Saguntines marvel: Sil. 2.617–619:
inuitas maculant cognato sanguine dextras
miranturque **nefas** auersa mente **peractum**
et facto sceleri inlacrimant.

The Furies marvel: *Theb.* 11.535–538:
sic auidi incurrunt; necdum letalia miscent
uulnera, sed coeptus sanguis, **facinus**que **peractum** est.
nec iam opus est Furiis; tantum **mirantur** et astant
laudantes, hominumque dolent plus posse furores.

D. Go, Saguntine souls: Sil. 2.695–697:
at uos, sidereae, quas nulla aequauerit aetas,
ite, decus terrarum, **animae**, uenerabile uulgus.
Elysium et castas sedes decorate piorum.

Go, Theban souls: *Theb.* 11.574–575:
ite truces **animae** funestaque Tartara leto
polluite et cunctas Erebi consumite poenas!

E. Never forget: Sil. 2.700–701:
audite, o gentes, neu rumpite foedera pacis
nec regnis postferte fidem!

Never remember: *Theb.* 11.577–579:
omnibus in terris scelus hoc omnique sub aeuo
uiderit una dies, monstrumque infame futuris
excidat, et soli memorent haec proelia reges.

This dialogue may be an example of "poetic interplay" or "epic interaction" between two contemporary writers of epic, a phenomenon now well studied in the Flavian epics.[33] The question of priority of composition is ultimately undecidable because many of the arguments are reversible. My proposition that Silius composed the fall of Saguntum before Statius' duel rests on the following points:

a) Scholars assume that Statius composed most of his *Thebaid* before Silius composed most of his *Punica*, but differ considerably on how much. Many have assumed that Silius' early books were likely available as early as the mid- to late 80s, perhaps through the recitations described in Pliny's

33 See Marks (2013) and Lovatt (2010).

obituary for the poet. Thus correspondences between Silius' narrative of the fall of Saguntum and various passages of the later books of the *Thebaid* would represent Statius' reception of Silius' episode.[34]

b) Reference to the Fury in Statius' description of the fall of Saguntum may allude to the events of *Punica* 2:[35]

praecipue cum sacrilega face miscuit arces
ipsius immeritaeque domos ac templa Sagunti
polluit et populis Furias immisit honestas.

Stat. *Silu.* 4.6.82–84

… above all when Hannibal with sacrilegious torch mangled the god's own towers, defiling the houses and temples of innocent Saguntum and filling her people with a noble frenzy.

tr. SHACKLETON BAILEY

Inclusion of Tisiphone appears to be Silius' innovation in a lengthy exemplary tradition. There is no reference to any Fury in Valerius Maximus, Lucan (both quoted above), or Petronius.[36] As Statius' *Siluae* dates to the early 90s, it is plausible that Statius could look back to work Silius had disseminated in the mid- to late 80s.

c) The paired birds-and-bees simile of Sil. 2.215–222, though drawing on models from Homer *Iliad* 2, is likely the source of Stat. *Ach.* 1.554–557.[37]

On balance, then, Silius' Saguntine episode probably comes first, though the possibility of later revision of each episode by both poets cannot be excluded. The brothers' duel forms a climax integral to Statius' narrative, but is only part of a local episode in Silius' *Punica*. Tisiphone's remark regarding the potential objections of personified Fides and Pietas is suggestive in this regard (see Table, A). Personified Fides plays no role in Statius, so why would she

34 See Ripoll (2014), Marks (2013), and Walter (2013).

35 See Littlewood (2011) lix and Coleman (1988).

36 Petr. 141.9: *Saguntini obsessi ab Hannibale humanas edere carnes nec hereditatem expectabant. Petelini idem fecerunt in ultima fame …*

37 See Ripoll (2014) and Ripoll and Soubiran (2008) on Stat. *Ach.* 1.555–557.

object to the brothers' duel? She is, however, a major figure in Silius' *Punica* 2. Marks suspects "bi-directional influence": "the number of parallels is not inconsiderable, and one would expect that as the number of parallels between the epics increases, so does the probability of bi-directional influence."[38]

So far I have discussed how allusion creates structural contrasts with the Capuan episode, the Lemnian massacre, and the Theban brothers' duel. I shall conclude this section with brief discussion of contrasts with other epic family motifs. Representations of troubled families in many genres of Roman literature often isolate affect as a significant zone of conflict. A patriarchal code prescribes particular affective relationships between relatives according to their positions in a family structure, usually under the name of *pietas*.[39] Conflict occurs when an agent does not perform according to expectations, and can be described in terms of "indifference". Oedipus' repentance late in Statius' *Thebaid* is one famous example of such a narrative: he recognizes his prior indifference to the death of his sons and regrets his attempt to escape his prescribed role as father (*Theb.* 11.605–626). At Silius' Saguntum, the Fury creates indifference to family ties in her victims' minds and thus enables them to slaughter their relatives: *sic thalami fugit omnis amor, dulcesque marito / effluxere tori et subiere obliuia taedae* ("And so all affection for their marriage chambers rushes away, the sweet bridal couches disappear from husbands' minds, and forgetfulness of the marriage-torch comes instead," Sil. 2.627–628; my translation). The motif is often applied in epic tradition to warfare or questing. Statius' Mars keeps the warriors at Thebes engaged in their civil warfare through a comparable inducement of amnesia.[40] The motif occurs in the context of questing when Valerius' Orpheus creates a similar separation of thought and affect in the Argonauts (V. Fl. 4.88–89). His refocusing of their attention on the quest that takes them far away from parents, wives, and children makes it possible for them to continue in the aftermath of their guilt at the slaughter of their friends at Cyzicus. These comparanda show how Silius has employed the amnesia motif to turn violence that would normally be directed outward back into the family.

38 See Marks (2014).

39 See Bettini (1991).

40 Stat. *Theb.* 8.383–385: *stat medius campis etiamnum cuspide sicca / Bellipotens, iamque hos clipeum, iam uertit ad illos / arma ciens aboletque domos, conubia, natos.*

The Exemplarity of the Narrative

Both the fall of Saguntum and the Theban brothers' duel were part of a lengthy exemplary tradition, and both epics self-consciously frame their contributions to this tradition. Silius' Fides and Statius' narrator wish to make an example of their victims (see Table, E): one which future ages must never forget in the *Punica*, and one which only kings should remember in the *Thebaid*.[41] Flavian readers would have evaluated the Saguntine suicide according to the conventions of exemplary aristocratic suicide.[42] As one of the consuls of the year 68, Silius might have known something about the staging of the suicides of Nero's courtiers Seneca, Lucan, and Petronius only a few years before.[43] The conclusion of the Capua episode (Sil. 13.261–298) shows how to translate such an exemplary narrative into epic. The Capuan leaders retreat to a private house and prepare philosophically for the soul's departure from the body's prison. Their leader Virrius "expels concern for living from his breast" and appeals to liberty as the goal of suicide.[44] Rather than disfigure themselves through stabbing one another in a maddened frenzy, the Capuan traitors embrace before drinking poison (Sil. 13.296–298). Fides and the Fury here work in concert rather than in opposition as they did at Saguntum: the fact that they now can apparently be collaborators creates a further opportunity to question Fides' *bona fides*. At Capua, the personified virtue lectures the traitors on keeping their word, while the demon from hell hands out the poison. The scene features the same republican-themed appeals to liberty as in Valerius' scene of suicide of Jason's parents,[45] but has been made even more tranquil. No invading soldiers disturb the Capuan leaders' procession to the Underworld. In the Capuan episode, Silius has created the suicide of a circle of Neronian aristocrats in a Flavian epic set in the middle Republic.[46]

By contrast, the Saguntines' mass suicide is democratic rather than aristocratic, as it involves every inhabitant and does not discriminate among social

41 See Georgacopoulou (1998).

42 See Hill (2004).

43 For the suicides of Lucan and Seneca, see Fantham (2011) and Ker (2009) respectively. On staging suicide as a spectacle, see Edwards (2007).

44 Sil. 13.263 *pulsis uiuendi e pectore curis*; Sil. 13.271–272 *cui cordi comes aeterna est Acherontis ad undam / libertas, petat ille meas mensasque dapesque*.

45 See Zissos (2009).

46 Wilson (2013) argues that Silius' poetics reflect the emphasis on historical epic in the Neronian era.

classes.[47] The Saguntines cannot display well-groomed corpses for others to admire, as famine has destroyed their bodies. The gods cannot watch to certify the deed's exemplary value, because the Fury has shrouded the city in smoke.[48] The Saguntines do not commit the violence itself with conscious intention, in contrast to the careful psychological preparation featured in Silius' Capuan suicide or in the historiographical and biographical accounts of Roman aristocratic suicide. Rather, unwilling killers hesitate to strike and must be compelled by the Fury (Sil. 2.614–619, 625–626). The Saguntum episode accordingly deliberately reverses each of the conventions of decorous quasi-philosophical aristocratic suicide exemplified at Capua.

Both the narrator and Fides herself attempt to frame the Saguntine suicide as a glorious deed.[49] The Capuan traitors intend to die as independent nobles; had they been content to give up this identity, they could have accommodated more easily to the Romans' demands. The Saguntines burn the *penates* which they took from their Rutulian homeland, and so break the connection with Italy that their ambassador Sicoris appealed to in his attempt to summon Roman assistance.[50] The narrator tries to make their death a sign of their *fides* to Rome, but the Saguntines choose to disavow Rome once they despair of their allies' arrival (Sil. 2.457–462). The narrator does not confer fame on the otherwise unknown participants in the mass suicide, as often occurs in battle scenes. Rather, the deed's exemplarity is already known to the contemporary reader through its persistence in the tradition.

Conclusion

The violence within the Saguntine family draws on multiple epic traditions of divinely inspired madness. Silius emplots the well-known story of the Saguntine suicide in a context of divine competition between the personification of Fides and the Fury Tisiphone. The narrative literalizes the metaphor found

47 See, for example, Sil. 2.681–682 *semiambusta iacet nullo discrimine passim / infelix obitus, permixto funere, turba.*

48 Sil. 2.609–611: *quae postquam congesta uidet feralis Erinys, / lampada flammiferis tinctam Phlegethontis in undis / quassat et inferna superos caligine condit.* "After the Fury sees them heap up these things, she shakes a torch dipped in Phlegethon's fiery waves and hides the gods above in hellish smoke" (my translation).

49 Narrator: Sil. 2.612–613, 696–707; *Fides*: Sil. 2.508–512.

50 See Bernstein (2008) 179–190. For burning the *penates* as cutting ties with Rome, see Augoustakis (2010) 113–136.

in Valerius Maximus of Fides gazing down upon the besieged town by making her an agent in the text who attempts to lead the Saguntines in armed resistance. The Fury instead turns the victims' violence against themselves by maddening them and instigating a massacre. This complex framing enables Silius to examine aspects of the conceptual nexus between civil war, family violence, and madness found in the preceding literary tradition. It also permits him to address one of the major political issues of his own day, the recovery from civil war promised by the Flavian imperial dynasty.[51] Silius' participation as consular in peace negotiations between the Vitellians and the Flavians (*Hist.* 3.65.2) gave him a perspective not shared by any other epic poet on the role of *fides* in wartime politics, though it should go without saying that we cannot determine how the *Punica* specifically expresses such a perspective.

Silius creates a contradiction of a type familiar from Lucan's *Bellum Ciuile*, where the political context has compromised the exemplary pursuit of virtue. Just as there can be no praiseworthy victory in a civil war, so there can be no praiseworthy mass suicide by perpetrators who cannot choose their actions. Thus the reader must resist the straightforward assignment of exemplary nobility to the Saguntines that Fides and the narrator, two of the privileged focalizers of the episode, want to create. The repeated references to the Saguntines' fate throughout the epic instead create a narrative of negative exemplarity within the *Punica* itself. Characters in the *Punica* remember the Saguntines more frequently for the extremity and unfairness of their suffering than for their *fides*.[52] Such implicit criticisms of Roman *fides* in the middle Republic also reflect upon the Romans of the Flavian era.[53] A greater commitment to *fides* might well have precluded the civil war that followed on the death of Nero. We find a similar concern for violated *fides* in Tacitus' account of the war's outbreak in the *Histories*, which features one story after another of loyalty betrayed and fraud rewarded, from the assassination of Galba to the revolt of the German legions.[54] The story of the Saguntines' compromised heroism reflects aspects of the expe-

51 On the relationship between Flavian epic families and the Flavian imperial family see also Stover and Littlewood in this volume.

52 Examples include *Sil.* 3.2 *non aequo superum genitore euersa Sagunti*, 3.564 *casus metuit iam Roma Sagunti*, 5.160 *passamque infanda Saguntum*, 7.280 *arta fames poenas miserae exactura Sagunti*, 9.292–293 *captae stimulatus caede Sagunti / Amphitryoniades*, 17.493–494 *claro deletum … Marte Saguntum*. Saguntum is recalled in the context of *fides* only at 12.431–432 *Petilia … / infelix fidei miseraeque secunda Sagunto*.

53 See Dominik (2006) and Dominik (2003).

54 See Ash (1999).

rience of the senatorial class in the Flavian era. The accounts of the transition to the Flavian era show the senatorial class caught up in a clash of forces beyond its control, engaged in a war frequently compared to family violence, and slowly coming to terms with the fact that the pursuit of short-term interest has compromised the traditional evaluation of moral behaviour.[55]

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55 See further Bernstein (2014).

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Sisters and Their Secrets in Flavian Epic*

Alison Keith

The emotional bond between sisters does not seem to have been a focus of classical epic (as far as we can tell from extant examples of the genre) until the Hellenistic period, when Apollonios of Rhodes introduced Medea's sister Chalciope into his *Argonautica*.[1] In a series of tightly plotted scenes in *Argonautica* 3, Apollonios depicts the sisters' secret meetings, collusion in the exchange of information, and formulation of a stratagem to save the Argonauts (amongst them Chalciope's sons and Medea's future husband Jason). Apollonios' exploration of the sisters' interactions is a striking departure from Homeric precedent, but one in which he was followed by the Roman epic poets, who repeatedly investigate sisterly relations in their narratives.[2] Thus Rome's first hexameter epic poet, Ennius, describes Ilia's report of her dream to an unnamed sister and their old nurse in the opening book of his *Annales* (34–50 Sk);[3] Vergil represents Dido's sister Anna as her sole confidante in *Aeneid* 4;[4] and Ovid includes several myths of sisters' transformations in the *Metamorphoses*, among them that of the three daughters of Minyas, turned into bats by the aggrieved god Bacchus whose worship they disdain in favour of wool-working and story-telling in *Metamorphoses* 4.[5] It is only in Flavian Latin epic, however, that sisters interact

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1 On the pre-Apollonian appearances of Medea's sister, see Manioti (2012) 184 nn. 486–487 with further bibliography. By contrast with classical epic, Athenian tragedy seems to have taken more of an interest in sisters, especially Sophocles in his tragedies *Antigone*, *Electra*, and the lost *Tereus*: see Hirai (1998); Söderbäck (2010); and Manioti (2012) 184 nn. 486–487.

2 I agree with Manioti (2012) (6, 10–11, 184–185 and *passim*), that Apollonios' depiction of the close relationship between Chalciope and Medea had a profound impact on the representation of sororal relations in Latin epic.

3 On Ennius' Ilia, see Krevans (1993); Connors (1994); Keith (2000) 42–46 and 104–107; Keith (2007); Elliott (2007).

4 On Dido's relationship with Anna, see Swallow (1951); Griset (1961); Hernández-Vista (1966); Barrett (1970); D'Anna (1975) and (1984); West (1979); Hexter (1992); Burbidge (2009); Brescia (2012); and Manioti (2012), with further bibliography.

5 On the Minyads, see Perdrizet (1932); Davis (1969); Leach (1974); Holzberg (1988); Rosati (1999); Keith (2010a); and Manioti (2012). Other sisters in the *Metamorphoses* include the Cecropids (Aglauros, Pandrosos and Herse) in Book 2, the Pandionids (Procne and Philomela)

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in more than one episode or book of a classical epic, and it is precisely this innovative large-scale treatment of sisterly relations that I explore in this chapter, in the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus, *Thebaid* of Papinius Statius, and *Punica* of Silius Italicus.

Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*

Valerius Flaccus, whose *Argonautica* was probably the earliest of the Flavian epics, is known to have taken Apollonios' *Ἀργοναυτικά* as the primary model for his Latin epic, and he creatively reworks Apollonios' narrative throughout.[6] Apollonios had naturalised the Argonauts' recourse to the assistance of Medea in securing the Fleece, by turning the narrative directly from Medea's lovelorn cares (μελεδήμασι, 3.471) to the cunning plan (μῆτις, 3.475)[7] proposed by Phrixos' son Argos, that Jason win the foreign princess over in the hope that she might put her powerful magic at his disposal, while he (Argos) sounds out his mother Chalciope in the hope that she might gain her sister's support (3.475–483). Later in the book, Medea manipulates her sister Chalciope into asking for her help (3.697–704), and, secretly overjoyed at the prospect of saving Jason, promptly offers her sister the aid of her magic. In Apollonios, the sisters collude in deceiving their parents, although Chalciope at least does not deceive her sister. Medea, however, as her Greek name suggests ("the devising woman"),[8] is a consummate artist of deceit. Magic powers are integral to Medea's character from the beginning of the mythological tradition,[9] and Apollonios relentlessly scrutinizes her double motivation for their use: to Chalciope she cites her love for her sister and her sister's sons (3.730–732), while to herself she acknowledges, in shame and fear, that she acts out of love for the stranger (3.741–742).

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in Book 6, and the daughters of Orion in Book 13: on the Cecropids, see Keith (1992) and Manioti (2012); on the Pandionids, see Klindienst (1984) and Manioti (2012); and on the daughters of Orion, see Keith (2000) 125–126.

6 On Valerius' debt to Apollonios, see Hershkowitz (1998) and Zissos (2008). On Valerius' dates, and the composition of his Latin *Argonautica*, see Stover (2012) 7–26.

7 On Apollonios' gendered treatment of μῆτις in the *Argonautica*, see Holmberg (1998); on this scene, see esp. 142–143.

8 Cf. *νόον καὶ μήδεα κούρης*, 3.826; *κακὸν καὶ ἀεικέα μήσαο νόστον*, 4.739. Natzel ((1992) 73) identifies an etymological relationship between Medea's name, the verb μήδεσθαι employed in these passages, and the noun μῆτις; cf. Holmberg (1998) 146.

9 On the mythological traditions about Medea, see Graf (1997).

Like Apollonios, Valerius makes deception a central structural feature of Medea's relationship with her sister, but he foregoes Apollonios' focus on the sisters' mutual deceptions, to explore rather the deceptions perpetrated on Medea by the goddess Juno, who repeatedly impersonates Chalciope in order to manipulate the young princess into aiding the Argonauts. Valerius thus eschews sustained exploration of the bond between the sisters, even as he relies heavily on his audience's literary 'memory' of this bond in Apollonios' epic. Indeed, Valerius self-consciously signals his debt to Apollonios' treatment of the close emotional bond between the sisters in his description of Medea, in erotic confusion, alternately seeking the privacy of her bedchamber and the solace of her sister's company:[10]

> … oraque quaerens
> hospitis aut solo maeret defecta cubili
> aut uenit in carae gremium refugitque sororis
> atque loqui conata silet rursusque recedens
> quaerit, ut Aeaeis hospes consederit oris
> Phrixus, ut aligeri Circen rapuere dracones.
>
> V. Fl. 7.115–120

> … and, seeking the stranger's face, she either grieves, tired out, on her lonely bed or comes to, and then flees again from, the lap of her dear sister; having tried to speak she falls silent, and coming back again she asks how Chalciope's Greek husband, Phrixus, settled in Aeetes' realm, and how the winged serpents snatched their aunt Circe away.

With the phrases *aut uenit in carae gremium refugitque sororis … rursusque recedens* (7.117–118), Valerius alludes obliquely to the emotional scene in Apollonios' epic, where the two sisters meet and develop a strategy to save the Argonauts. Valerius' emphasis on Medea's repeated recourse to her sister—sounded in the recurrence of the prefix *re-* (*refugit*, 7.117; *recedens*, 7.118), itself signifying reiteration; the repetition of forms of the verb *quaero* (7.115, 119); and the use of the adverb *rursus* (7.118)—underlines his own literary memory of the Apollonian model and confirms the sisters' close and loving relationship. The Valerian Medea too explicitly avows her love for her sister in the soliloquy that follows the poet's description of her erotic confusion, as she reflects upon

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10 I cite the text of Valerius' *Argonautica* from Ehlers (1980); translations are my own, although I have consulted Mozley (1934).

Jason's blood relationship to her sister's husband Phrixus (7.136–137): *namque et sidereo nostri de sanguine Phrixi / dicitur, et caram uidi indoluisse sororem* ("for he is said to be of the heavenly line of our Phrixus, and I saw that my dear sister grieved for him").

Before we hear from Medea herself, however, Valerius exploits Apollonios' depiction of the sisters' mutual love in his representation of the disguised Juno's manipulation of Medea in the *teichoskopia* scene of Book 6. During the civil war at Colchis in which Medea's father Aeetes embroils the Argonauts, Juno determines that the only way to save the Greek company is by securing the aid of Medea's magic and so she assumes the form of Chalciope in order to manipulate her: *cingitur arcanis Saturnia laeta uenenis / atque hinc uirgineae uenit ad penetralia sedis / Chalciopen imitata sono formaque sororem* ("Saturn's daughter Juno, happy in the secret poisons [of Venus' girdle], came thence to the innermost rooms of the maiden's apartment, having assumed the appearance of her sister Chalciope, in form and voice", 6.477–479). As an unmarried daughter of the royal house, Medea dwells deep within her father's palace in rooms accessible only to family members and her female attendants. Juno's disguise as Chalciope allows her unquestioned access to Medea's quarters, in conformity with Apollonios' representation of the sisters' loving relationship and easy mutual access to their secluded bedchambers.[11] In this regard, Valerius' use of the participle *imitata* does metaliterary work in its documentation of the Latin poet's debt to Apollonios, even as he departs most egregiously from his model's version of events.

The disguised Juno-Chalciope informs Medea of the arrival of the Argonauts and their alliance with Aeetes against their uncle Perses, and she urges Medea to join the spectators on the ramparts and survey the fighting (6.482–487). Her words invoke the intimate context of women's gossip and Medea's trusting response to her 'sister' further implies just such a scenario:

> illa nihil contra. nec enim dea passa manumque
> implicat et rapidis mirantem passibus aufert.
> ducitur infelix ad moenia summa futuri
> nescia uirgo mali et falsae commissa sorori …
>
> V. Fl. 6.488–491

Medea made no response. For the goddess did not allow it but took her hand and with rapid steps dragged her, wondering, away. The unlucky

11 Fucecchi (1997) 119–122, ad loc.; Spaltenstein (2002) 141–142; cf. Manioti (2012) 183–194.

> maiden was led to the highest ramparts, unaware of the ill to come and trusting in her false sister …

The sisters' physical intimacy, on which Juno trades throughout the scene, attests to their emotional closeness. But the goddess' touch, like that of the necklace (borrowed from Venus), inspires Medea with passionate love for Jason:

> interdum blandae derepta monilia diuae
> contrectat miseroque aptat flagrantia collo,
> quaque dedit teneros aurum furiale per artus
> deficit; ac sua uirgo deae gestamina reddit,
> non gemmis, non illa leui turbata metallo,
> sed facibus, sed mole dei, quem pectore toto
> iam tenet; extremus roseo pudor errat in ore.
>
> V. Fl. 6.668–674

> Meanwhile she handles the necklace snatched from the seductive goddess and fits it, blazing, to her neck, and where she has set the maddening gold on her tender limbs, she grows faint; and the maiden gives back her ornament to the goddess, disturbed not by the jewels nor by the light metal, but by the fire and the vast size of the god whom she holds in her whole breast; a last vestige of shame plays over her rosy cheek.

Like the snake-necklace that infects the Vergilian Amata with desire for war against the Trojans in *Aeneid* 7[12] or the necklace of Harmonia, desire for which leads Eriphyle to send her husband Amphiaraus into battle as the Seventh against Thebes in *Thebaid* 4, Juno's ornament (borrowed from Venus, V. Fl. 6.465–476) maddens its wearer, imbuing Medea with a reckless passion for the Argive prince Jason:

> ac prior his: 'credisne patrem promissa daturum,
> o soror, Argolicus cui dis melioribus hospes
> contigit? aut belli quantum iam restat acerbi?
> heu quibus ignota sese pro gente periclis

12 Fucecchi (1997) 224, notes Valerius' verbal debts here to the scene in *Aeneid* 7 in which Allecto inspires Amata to oppose the betrothal of her daughter Lavinia to Aeneas (*A*. 7.351–355, 374–375); cf. Spaltenstein (2002) 192, ad loc.

> obicit!' haec fantem medio in sermone reliquit
> incepti iam Iuno potens securaque fraudis.
> imminet e celsis audentius improba muris
> uirgo nec ablatam sequitur quaeritue sororem.
>
> V. Fl. 6.775–782

> And with these words first Medea spoke: "Do you believe, sister, that our father will grant his promises, to whom the Argive stranger has arrived with the intervention of the providential gods? Or how much bitter war now remains? Alas, into what dangers does he cast himself on behalf of an unknown race!" So saying, she was abandoned by Juno in the midst of their conversation, now that the goddess had achieved her purpose and was secure in her deception. The shameless maiden leans more boldly from the lofty walls, and neither follows nor seeks her vanished sister.

In this lengthy scene, Juno successfully deceives Medea by impersonating the very family member with whom the literary tradition represents the Colchian princess as enjoying the closest relationship, her trusted sister and confidante Chalciope.[13] Throughout, Valerius draws on the conventional tropes of sisterly love and domestic familiarity—the secluded quarters of the daughters of the palace, the exchange of gossip and secrets between siblings, and the physical and emotional intimacy that subtend their relations.

Juno-Chalciope's manipulation of Medea, however, is not without precedent, both generally in the context of sororal relations (as we may remember from Dido's deception of Anna in planning her suicide), and specifically in the context of the myth of Medea. As we have seen, Apollonios exploits the etymology of Medea's name in his portrait of the princess as a master manipulator—of sister, parents, and Jason. She herself, however, is also manipulated, deceived by both the gods (as Hera, Athena, Aphrodite, and Eros all conspire to make her fall in love with Jason) and her lover (as the Argonauts press Jason to secure her aid at any cost). Valerius retains Apollonios' emphasis on Medea's vulnerability to divine and mortal manipulation and, indeed, extends it by stripping her of her traditional (literary) success in deceiving her sister. Instead, Valerius makes Medea the dupe first of the disguised Juno-Chalciope and later of the dis-

13 Cf. Manioti (2012) 183–194. On Medea's relationship to her father Aeetes, and on her marriage to Jason, see respectively Stocks and Buckley in this volume.

guised Venus-Circe (7.153–399).[14] At no point does Valerius depict the Colchian princess speaking directly with her sister. Nonetheless, his depiction of Juno's deception of Medea depends very precisely on the literary tradition of sisterly love in general, and the Apollonian representation of Medea's love for Chalciope in particular. In the epics of Statius and Silius, we shall observe a continuing focus both on sisters' emotional intimacy and on their resulting vulnerability to deception and manipulation.

Statius' *Thebaid*

Sisters play a prominent role in Statius' *Thebaid*, a dark exploration of intrafamilial strife in the House of Oedipus. Oedipus' curse on his sons/brothers Eteocles and Polynices sets the epic in motion, but the Theban king's wife/mother Jocasta and daughters/sisters Antigone and Ismene repeatedly struggle to undo his work. Statius thus sets sisters against brothers, wife against husband, and women against men, in his representation of the family's inter- (and intra-) generational struggles, associating the Theban womenfolk with love and concord, their menfolk with violence and conflict.[15]

We meet Antigone first, in a *teichoskopia* scene at the outset of *Thebaid* 7 that (like the parallel scene with Medea in Valerius' *Argonautica*) establishes the maiden's martial and amatory innocence:[16]

turre procul sola nondum concessa uideri
Antigone populis teneras defenditur atra
ueste genas; iuxtaque comes quo Laius ibat
armigero; tunc uirgo senem regina ueretur.
quae sic orsa prior: 'spesne obstatura Pelasgis
haec uexilla, pater? Pelopis descendere totas
audimus gentes: dic, o precor, extera regum
agmina; nam uideo quae noster signa Menoeceus,
quae noster regat arma Creon, quam celsus aena
Sphinge per ingentes Homoloidas exeat Haemon.'
sic rudis Antigone …

Stat. *Theb*. 7.243–253

14 On Medea's interaction with the disguised Venus-Circe, see Manioti (2012) 195–206, and the commentaries of Perutelli (1997) and Stadler (1993) ad loc.

15 On marital bonds in the *Thebaid* see Newlands in this volume.

16 I cite the text of the *Thebaid* from Hill (1983); translations are my own, although I have consulted Mozley (1934) and Shackleton Bailey (2003).

> Far off on a lonely tower, not yet permitted to be seen by the public, Antigone conceals her tender face with a black cloak and next to her stands her attendant, Laius' old arm-bearer; the royal maiden revered the old man. She spoke first: "Is there any hope that our detachments will withstand the force of the Pelasgians, father? We hear that all Pelops' tribes are coming down: tell me, I beg, of the ranks of foreign princes; for I see the standards our cousin Menoeceus bears, the arms our uncle Creon commands, and how Haemon issues forth through the huge Homoloean Gates with towering crest of brazen Sphinx." So spoke untutored Antigone …

Antigone's traditional inward-looking focus on the male members of her family emerges clearly in this passage, which establishes her genealogical descent from her grandfather Laius through the figure of his armbearer, her pedagogue Phorbas,[17] and depicts her curiosity about the Argive troops assembling on the plain before the city to face Thebes' champions, vividly incarnated in Creon and his sons.[18] Her question affords Phorbas (and through him the poet) the opportunity to showcase a mini-catalogue of Theban heroes (7.254–274), which graphically contrasts the female (and feminized) world of Thebes with the masculine field of battle where a dazzling array of Greek troops is massed below. Given the close relationship Statius later depicts between Antigone and Ismene, it is perhaps surprising that Antigone should review the assembled host without her sister, especially since—like Medea in Valerius' *Argonautica*—Antigone seems unused to stepping out of the women's quarters: the *teichoskopia* marks the occasion of her emergence into both adulthood and Statius' epic.

We next meet Antigone later in the book, when Statius confirms his gendered design of the epic's action by embedding the princess in the company of her sister and mother.[19] As dawn breaks, Oedipus' wife/mother and daughters/sisters take to the field in a doomed effort to dissuade Polynices from

17 For Phorbas' literary ancestry, see Smolenaars (1994) 125 *ad* 245f.

18 Smolenaars (1994), ad loc., says nothing about Antigone's interest in Haemon here, but his own literary detective work tracing the sources of Statius' characterization of Phorbas suggests that we should be open to considering whether Statius may have expended equal care in his characterization of Antigone in her appearances in the epic. Her focus on Haemon here may recall the tradition of their engagement/marriage in myth, as for example in Sophocles' *Antigone*.

19 Jocasta's daughters are contrasted with her sons, Eteocles and Polynices, impiously waging war against one another. On the gender dynamics of this passage, see Keith (2000) 98.

engaging Eteocles' forces in battle before the walls of Thebes (*Theb.* 7.474–481). The united front presented by Oedipus' wife/mother and daughters/sisters, rhetorically underlined in the sonorous phrase *hinc atque hinc natae* ("on this side and on that her daughters", 7.479) offers the starkest of contrasts to the determination of his brothers/sons to engage in fratricidal civil war, and earns the women the poet's despairing reflection that they are "now the better sex" (*melior iam sexus*, 7.479).

When Jocasta demands to be taken to her son Polynices, who leads the Argive forces threatening Thebes, he receives them with tears of joy:

> … uenit attonitae Cadmeius heros
> obuius, et raptam lacrimis gaudentibus implet
> solaturque tenens, atque inter singula, 'matrem,
> matrem' iterat, nunc ipsam urguens, nunc cara sororum
> pectora …
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 7.492–496

> The Cadmeian hero came to meet them with astonishment, snatched his mother in his arms and wept joyfully, consoled her in his embrace, and amidst his sighs repeated 'mother, mother', embracing now her, now his dear sisters' breasts.

The grammatical parallelism of Statius' repeated *nunc … nunc* (7.495) graphically depicts the women's unanimity of purpose, and Polynices seems inclined to yield to his mother's request that he negotiate with his brother about possession of the throne with her as arbitrator (7.497–510). She chides him for thinking that her mission could entail deception (7.511–515), and dares him to display his family captive in his triumph if he does not believe her (7.516–519): *quodsi adeo perstas, ultro tibi, saeue triumphum / detulimus: religa captas in terga sorores, / inice uincla mihi …* ("But if you persist, we have handed ourselves over, of our own accord, to you, cruel one! Seize your sisters and bind their hands behind their backs, cast chains on me"). Jocasta treats her daughters as a corporate unit in this picture, their interests virtually indistinguishable from one another, and Polynices seems to share her view of his sisters as undifferentiated (7.534–537): *ipse etiam ante oculos nunc matris ad oscula uersus, / nunc rudis Ismenes, nunc flebiliora precantis / Antigones, uariaque animum turbante procella / exciderat regnum …* ("He himself, even before their eyes, turned now to his mother's kisses, now to those of untaught Ismene, now to Antigone, as she implored him more tearfully, and in the storm of conflicting emotion, he forgot about the kingdom …"). For as the prince's mother and sisters tearfully implore

him not to attack his natal city, the poet applies to Ismene the very adjective with which he had characterized Antigone earlier, in the *teichoskopia* (7.253, quoted above).[20] The sisters' unanimity of purpose and similarity of description in Book 7 recalls Vergil's introduction of Anna as Dido's *unanima soror* (*A.* 4.8), though any expectation that they will present a united front must be tempered by our knowledge of the literary tradition, especially Sophocles' *Antigone*.

And indeed, Statius begins to distinguish between the Theban sisters when he turns from the battlefield in Book 8 to report a conversation between the girls in their secluded quarters. Alone together, Antigone and Ismene lament their family's accursed history and trace the origins of the current conflict:

> interea thalami secreta in parte sorores,
> par aliud morum miserique innoxia proles
> Oedipodae, uarias miscent sermone querelas.
> nec mala quae iuxta, sed longa ab origine fati,
> haec matris taedas, oculos ast illa paternos,
> altera regnantem, profugum gemit altera fratrem,
> bella ambae. grauis hinc miseri cunctatio uoti:
> nutat utroque timor, quemnam hoc certamine uictum,
> quem uicisse uelint: tacite praeponderat exul.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 8.607–615

> Meanwhile, in a secluded part of the palace, the sisters—a pair of different character, innocent offspring of wretched Oedipus—mingle their various laments with conversation. Nor do they review the ills that stand near, but those from the distant origin of their familial destiny: this one grieves their mother's marriage torches, but that one their father's eyes; one grieves the ruler, the other the exiled brother, both the war. Thence arises heavy hesitation over their wretched wishes: fear sways them in either direction, whom they want conquered in this contest and whom they want to have conquered: in their silence, the exile gained greater favour.

20 Again, however, the poet may hint at Antigone's greater investment in her male kinsfolk in his description of her more tearful countenance. Editors print the substantive *flebiliora* for the confused report of the MSS: see Hill (1983) ad loc., and Smolenaars (1994) 243. On any reading, Statius has given greater characterization to Antigone and her grief in these lines than to her mother and sister.

The sisters' intimacy, isolation, and marginalization are reflected in the setting of their conversation in their bedchamber, deep within the palace, which recalls the intimate settings in which Medea and Juno-Chalciope visit one another in Valerius' *Argonautica*.[21] The conversation between Oedipus' daughters/sisters interrupts Statius' report of the second day of battle and postpones his treatment of the death of Ismene's fiancé Atys, who has just fallen wounded on the battlefield (8.554–606). Atys' plight motivates the poet's cut-away to the scene between the two sisters (8.607–620), as he prepares the way for a scene of feminine lamentation (Iliadic in inspiration) that will ensue upon the report of the warrior's death in battle (8.621–654).[22] The contrast between the feminine world of the *oikos* and the masculine world of the *polis* (and the battlefield before it) will thus collapse in the course of this scene.

Statius represents the conversation between Antigone and Ismene as focused, at least initially, on their family troubles, just like the conversations between Medea and her sister in the *Argonautica*. Valerius, in keeping with the mythic tradition, had also emphasized Medea's incipient love for the handsome stranger, Jason, as motivating her conversation with Juno-Chalciope and, later, with her real sister. By contrast, Statius opens the sisters' conversation with a tight focus on their natal family and his characterization of Oedipus' daughters/sisters in this scene is consistent with the literary tradition of Attic drama, in which they are represented not only as dutiful daughters to their father and loving sisters to their brothers, but also as fatally obsessed with their tragic family history.[23] He expressly describes the pair as far removed in character from their brothers (including their father/brother, Oedipus, 8.608–609), and we have already seen them join their mother Jocasta in an effort to prevent their brothers from going to war. Yet the sisters are divided in their grief over the tragic family history and their brothers' role in the war, and their divisions mirror (in far less threatening form) their brothers' hostility on the battlefield.

Statius describes the sisters' conversation as a performance of lament from the outset:

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21 On this scene, see Augoustakis (2016), ad loc. See also Newlands in this volume (with a focus on Ismene's relationship to Atys).

22 On lament in this scene, see Manioti (2012) 251.

23 Augoustakis (2016) *ad* 8.609, notes that Statius here evokes the opening lines of Sophocles' *Antigone* (1–6). On Statius' use of Athenian tragedies in the *Thebaid*, see Bessone (2011) 75–101.

sic Pandioniae repetunt ubi fida uolucres
hospitia atque larem bruma pulsante relictum
stantque super nidos ueterisque exordia fati
adnarrant tectis: it truncum ac flebile murmur;
uerba putant, uoxque illa tamen non dissona uerbis.
atque ibi post lacrimas et longa silentia rursus
incohat Ismene. …

Stat. *Theb.* 8.616–622

Thus when Pandion's daughters, transformed into birds, seek again loyal welcome and the nest abandoned at frost's onslaught, and they stand above their nests and relate to the house the beginning of the old fate: a broken sound of mourning goes forth; they think it words, and their voice does not sound unlike words. And then, after tears and a long silence, Ismene begins again …

The grief Antigone and Ismene express in their initial laments (*querelae*, 8.609), like that of Pandion's daughters (the swallow and the nightingale),[24] does not focus on the distant origins of their tragic family history (*longa ab origine fati*, 8.610) but obsessively rehearses the recent travails of their natal family. Contemporary scholarship on lament in the Greco-Roman world has seen in women's lament the progenitor of male singers' 'epic' narratives,[25] and the sisters' plaintive rehearsal of their familial history precisely foreshadows Statius' transmutation of their lament into his own epic song.[26]

Before their conversation finally devolves into undiluted lament upon the discovery that Ismene's fiancé Atys has been fatally wounded, however, Ismene

24 On the relationship between the Pandionids and Oedipus' daughters, see Manioti (2012) 251.

25 See especially Murnaghan (1999) and Perkell (2008). On women's lament in Latin epic, see Barchiesi (1978); Wiltshire (1989); Nugent (1992); Perkell (1997); Dietrich (1999); Fantham (1999); Pagán (2000); Keith (2008); and Manioti (2012) 209–258. On Roman funerary practice, see Toynbee (1971); Kierdorf (1980); Hopkins (1983); Flower (1996); Bodel (1999); Richlin (2001); Corbeill (2004); Edwards (2007); and Dutsch (2008).

26 The sisters' conversation precisely recalls Statius' articulation of his own epic project, in the proem of the *Thebaid*, to forego an account of the origins of Thebes' troubles and focus instead on the fratricidal finale: *gentisne canam primordia dirae, / … / longa retro series … / … limes mihi carminis esto / Oedipodae confusa domus* … (*Theb.* 1.4, 7, 16–17, "Shall I sing of the origins of the dread race? … The thread goes far back … Let the path of my song be the confused house of Oedipus …").

reveals to her sister a dream that troubled her sleep the night before (8.622–635), in which she sees herself at last a bride to Atys (8.625–627): *ecce ego, quae thalamos, nec si pax alta maneret, / tractarem sensu,* (*pudet heu!*) *conubia uidi / nocte, soror* ("why I saw my wedding last night, sister—for shame!—I who viewed the marriage-chamber with reluctance, even if sure peace obtained"). The classical epic tradition is rich in the exchange of sisterly confidences of both dreams and love.[27] Ismene's narrative recalls particularly closely a passage in the first book of Ennius' *Annales*, in which Ilia reports an amatory dream to her (unnamed) sister and their nurse, but sisters' confession of their erotic desires to one another is itself a convention of the classical epic tradition from Apollonios' Medea to Vergil's Dido and beyond. Nor does the amatory fare even need to be personal in this tradition: the Nereids listen to their sister Clymene's racy tales of love as they spin in *Georgics* 4, while the Minyads too swap sexy stories to lighten their woolworking in *Metamorphoses* 4.[28] In contrast to this tradition of sexually informed, often explicitly lascivious, women, Statius depicts Ismene as young, naïve, and chaste. She has seen her fiancé only once, and that by accident (8.627–630): *… sponsum unde mihi sopor attulit amens / uix notum uisu? semel his in sedibus illum, / dum mea nescio quid quo spondentur foedera pacto, / respexi non sponte, soror* ("whence did sleep bring me my fiancé, whom I scarcely knew by sight? I saw him once, and not by design, in these halls, sister, while some betrothal was conducted on my behalf in some ceremony"). Her conformity with parental regulation, and Roman standards of filial obedience, could hardly be more clearly signaled. It is especially striking that Ismene not only admits no love for her fiancé when she confides her dream to her sister, but even explicitly disavows any interest in her forthcoming marriage (8.625–626, quoted above). It has therefore been argued that Ismene here tries to deceive her sister about her very real love for Atys, which she will acknowledge over his corpse when she is alone (8.653–654): *ibi demum teste remoto / fassa pios gemitus lacrimasque in lumina fudit* ("there at last, with any witness removed, she indulged her pious groans and drowned her eyes with tears").[29] If this is the case, we should note the parallel with the Medea tradition of sisterly deception in affairs of the heart.

27 On this scene, and its literary tradition, see Scioli (2010) and Manioti (2012) 73–83, both with extensive bibliography; also Newlands in this volume; on dreams in the *Argonautica* see Buckley in this volume.

28 On this pair of sororal amatory narrative set-pieces, see Rosati (1999) and Manioti (2012) 259–281, both with further bibliography.

29 Manioti (2012) 81–83.

The Theban sisters Antigone and Ismene have an Argive counterpart in the daughters of King Adrastus, Argia and Deipyle, introduced at the end of *Thebaid* 1 and married to Polynices and Tydeus respectively in *Thebaid* 2.[30] There is no comparable exchange of confidences between Argia and Deipyle, however, until the final book of the poem, when the poet briefly reports Argia's narration to her sister about her perilous journey to Thebes, discovery of Polynices' unburied body on the field of battle, and burial of her husband's corpse with the help of her sister-in-law Antigone (*ut saeuos narret uigiles Argia sorori*, 12.804). But Nikoletta Manioti has well argued that in the burial scene itself, earlier in *Thebaid* 12, the sisters-in-law Antigone and Argia become 'sisters by choice' through the intensity of their shared experience of burying Polynices in the face of Creon's interdiction:[31]

> … hic pariter lapsae iunctoque per ipsum
> amplexu miscent auidae lacrimasque comasque,
> partitaeque artus redeunt alterna gementes
> ad uultum et cara uicibus ceruice fruuntur.
> dumque modo haec fratrem memorat, nunc illa maritum,
> mutuaque exorsae Thebas Argosque renarrant …
>
> Stat. *Theb*. 12.385–390

> Here beside one another they fell and in joint embrace of the same body they greedily mix their tears and hair, shared his limbs and, lamenting in alternation, return to his face, and in turn delight in the sight of his dear neck. While one recalls her brother, and now the other her husband, they began to retell in turn the tale of Thebes and Argos …

The reciprocal exchange of narrative and lament, interspersed with their mutual performance of burial, underlines the common purpose and shared love of the sisters-in-law, and Statius' use of rhetorical parallelism and iterative vocabulary further emphasizes their unanimity of action.[32]

Yet just as Polynices' marriage to Argia embroils Argos in the war at Thebes, so the common purpose of Antigone and Argia gives way to angry rivalry when

30 On the Argive sisters' relationship, see Manioti (2012) 55–67, with further bibliography; also (briefly) Manioti in this volume.

31 Manioti (2012) 83–115; see also Pollmann (2004) 178–179, ad loc.

32 Cf. Pollmann (2004) 178, *ad* 385–386, on the "remarkable … omission of names and pronouns that would differentiate the sisters-in-law as they embrace Polynices".

Creon's guards discover their action (12.450–455).[33] Disdaining deception, the sisters-in-law lay their competing claims to the crime boastfully before the soldiers:

> ambitur saeua de morte animosaque leti
> spes furit: haec fratris rapuisse, haec coniugis artus
> contendunt uicibusque probant: 'ego corpus', 'ego ignes',
> 'me pietas', 'me duxit amor'. deposcere saeua
> supplicia et dextras iuuat insertare catenis.
> nusquam illa alternis modo quae reuerentia uerbis,
> iram odiumque putes; tantus discordat utrimque
> clamor, et ad regem qui deprendere trahuntur.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 12.456–463

> They compete for a cruel demise and bold hope of death rages [in their hearts]: one boasts that she stole her brother's limbs, the other her husband's, and they prove their words by turns: "I brought the body", "I the flames", "Piety led me", "Love me". It pleases them to demand savage punishment and to insert their right arms into chains. Nowhere is that reverence which was heard just now in their mutual exchange, you would think it anger and hatred: so loud the cry of discord on each side, as they drag their captors to the king.

Statius underlines the irony of their rivalry with the continued application to the sisters-in-law of grammatical parallelisms (*haec ... haec*, 457; *ego ... ego*, 458; *me ... me*, 459) and the vocabulary of mutuality and alternation (*uicibus*, 458; *alternis uerbis*, 461; *utrimque*, 472).[34] In this scene Statius bears vivid witness to the Theban propensity for internecine conflict infecting even 'the better sex' and the closest, most like-minded 'sisters' in the epic.[35]

In this context, it is worth considering the mutual rivalry of a final pair of sisters in the epic—the Furies Tisiphone and Megaera. For the hellish sisters' actions and interactions in *Thebaid* 11 lay bare the hidden *ultimae* of sororal relations—indeed all familial relations—in Oedipal Thebes.[36] Statius

33 On this scene, and the descent of the sisters-in-law into rivalry, see Hardie (1993) 45–46.
34 Cf. Pollmann (2004) 194–196, ad loc.
35 On Argia and Antigone's relationship see Manioti and Newlands in this volume.
36 On family relations in the *Thebaid*, see Bernstein (2008) 64–104. On the role of the Furies in this scene, see Hardie (1993) 44–45; and on the role of the Furies in Flavian epic more broadly, see Hardie (1999) and (1993) 57–87.

had opened the epic with Oedipus' summons of Tisiphone in a curse on his sons/brothers, Eteocles and Polynices, that they die in civil war and fratricide (1.59–87), but as the eleventh book of the poem opens the Fury no longer has the strength by herself to compel the brothers together in single combat and thereby conclude the war:

> iamque potens scelerum geminaeque exercita gentis
> sanguine Tisiphone fraterna claudere quaerit
> bella tuba: nec se tanta in certamina fidit
> sufficere, inferna comitem ni sede Megaeram
> et consanguineos in proelia suscitet angues.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 11.57–61

> And now Tisiphone, powerful in Tydeus' crime of cannibalism and excited by the blood of the two nations, seeks to end the brothers' war with the war-trumpet: nor does she have confidence that she can be strong enough by herself in so great a contest, unless she rouses her companion Megaera from the infernal abode and sends her sister's snakes into battle.

Accordingly, Tisiphone summons her sister, whom she addresses as *germana* (i.e., "full sister", 11.75), from their father Hades' court and bids her join their forces (*da iungere uires*, 11.96) to commit Oedipus' sons/brothers to single combat:[37]

> non solitas acies nec Martia bella paramus,
> sed fratrum (licet alma Fides Pietasque[38] repugnent,
> uincentur), fratrum stringendi comminus enses.

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37 On Statius' extended reworking in this passage of the scene in *Aeneid* 7 (324–565) where Juno summons Allecto from the Underworld to foment war between the Trojans and Latins, see Venini (1970) 21–24 *ad Theb.* 11.62–74.

38 Are we to imagine the personified deities Fides and Pietas as a pair of celestial sisters, opposed to the infernal sisters Tisiphone and Megaera? There is no evidence for such a tradition in Roman religion, but Statius' propensity for depicting competing sets of doublets throughout the epic may authorize the interpretation of these traditional personifications in this light here. On Fides and Pietas in Roman religion and history, see Raffaelli, Danese and Lanciotti (1997); Fears (1981); Piccaluga (1981); Freyburger (1986); and Nash (1988). On doublets and doubling in Statius' *Thebaid*, see Hardie (1992); O'Gorman (2005); and Korneeva (2011).

grande opus! ipsae odiis, ipsae discordibus armis
aptemur. quid lenta uenis? agedum elige cuius
signa feras. ambo faciles nostrique ...

Stat. *Theb.* 11.97–102

We are undertaking not the usual battle-lines and martial battles, but that of brothers (though kindly Faith and Piety resist, they will be overwhelmed)—brothers' swords must be drawn in hand-to-hand combat. A huge task! We ourselves are fitted out with hatred and hostile arms. Why do you come slowly? Come, choose whose standards you would bear. Both are compliant, indeed they are already ours ...

Statius underlines the Furies' united front with a series of rhetorical parallelisms that describe both the infernal sisters and their 'champions', Eteocles and Polynices. Tisiphone and Megaera perfectly embody the unanimity of purpose enacted in mutual rivalry that animates not only Argia and Antigone (when they are discovered burying Polynices), but also Polynices and Eteocles (and so many other dyads in the epic, including the Theban and Argive armies), as they undertake to work together but separately on the battlefield:

'... tibi pareat impius exul,
Argolicumque impelle nefas; neu mitis Adrastus
praeualeat plebesque, caue, Lernaea moretur.
uade, et in alternas inimica reuertere pugnas.'
talia partitae diuersum abiere sorores:

Stat. *Theb.* 11.109–113

"... Let the impious exile obey you, and you drive on the Argive crime; do not let mild Adrastus prevail and take care that the Lernaean troops not delay you. Go on, and return to the mutual fray—as my enemy!" Having apportioned their tasks thus, the sisters went off in different directions ...

Especially instructive is the sisters' united purpose in adopting the role of "foe" on the battlefield (*inimica*, 11.112), when they return to the "mutual fray" (*in alternas pugnas*, 11.112).

Megaera discharges Tisiphone's command to attend Polynices (*iamque per Argolicas Erebo sata uirgo cohortis / uestigat Polynicis iter portisque sub ipsis / inuenit*, 11.136–138, "and now the maiden sprung from Hell tracks Polynices' trek through the Argive ranks and finds him under the very gates of Thebes") and inspire him with battle-lust (11.150–152, *cum uero Acherontis aperti / Dira*

ter admoto tetigit thoraca flagella, / ardet inops animi, "but when the dread Fury of yawning Acheron moved her whip three times and struck his breastplate, he raged out of control"). Under her impetus, he no longer desires to recover the throne of Thebes but only to commit "crime and murder, and to die in his wounded brother's blood" (*scelus et caedem et perfossi in sanguine fratris / expirare cupit*, 11.153–154). When Adrastus' offer of the Argive throne to Polynices nearly succeeds in calming the Theban prince's blood-lust, the Fury intervenes again to stop the ears of the Theban prince and send him into battle:

> coeperat et leni senior mulcere furentem
> adloquio: scidit orsa nouo terrore cruenta
> Eumenis, alipedemque citum fataliaque arma
> protinus, Inachii uultus expressa Pherecli,
> obtulit ac fidas exclusit casside uoces.
> ac super haec: 'abrumpe moras, celeremus! et illum
> aduentare ferunt portis.' sic omnia uicit,
> correptumque iniecit equo; uolat aequore aperto
> pallidus instantemque deae circumspicit umbram.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 11.196–204

> The old king had begun to soothe his raging son-in-law with gentle speech: the Fury cruelly broke off his words with a new fear, and straightway, having assumed the face of Argive Phereclus, offered Polynices his swift horse and deadly arms, and she shut out trusty counsels from his ears with his helmet. And she added "Abjure delay, let's hasten! They say he too is arriving at the gates". In this way she vanquished all scruples and seizing him she set him on his horse; he flies pale over the open plain and sees the goddess' menacing shadow.

Just as Megaera tracks Polynices, so Tisiphone attends Eteocles as he sacrifices to Jupiter and ensures that his prayers reach the ruler of the Underworld rather than their intended target:

> sacra Ioui merito Tyrius pro fulmine ductor
> nequiquam Danaos ratus exarmasse ferebat.
> nec pater aetherius diuumque has ullus ad aras,
> sed mala Tisiphone trepidis inserta ministris
> astat et inferno praeuertit uota Tonanti.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 11.205–209

> The Tyrian general was vainly bringing to Jupiter the sacrificial offerings his lightning-stroke had earned, believing that the Argives had lain down their arms. Neither the heavenly father nor any of the celestial gods stands at his altars, but evil Tisiphone is there, among his trembling attendants, and she turns his prayers away to the underworld Thunderer.

Recognizing that the sacrifice is ill-omened and the outcome of combat uncertain, Eteocles' ministers counsel him against engaging his brother, but Creon (stricken by the death of his son Menoeceus in the previous day's battle, 10.609–826) insists that he do so (11.262–297). Even as Eteocles arms himself for the duel, Jocasta and Antigone have some success in their renewed attempts to dissuade the brothers from single combat, launching separate appeals to the brothers, Jocasta to Eteocles at the city-gate (11.315–353) and Antigone to Polynices from the city-walls (11.354–382).

It therefore falls to the Furies to drive the brothers onto the battlefield. First Megaera (11.382–383): *his paulum furor elanguescere dictis / coeperat, obstreperet quamquam atque obstaret Erinys* ("At Antigone's words Polynices' rage slackens, though the Fury protested loudly and blocked his path"). With Megaera on the point of failure, however, Tisiphone strikes (11.387–388): *subito cum matre repulsa / Eumenis eiecit fractis Eteoclea portis* ("suddenly thrusting his mother out of the way, the Fury broke open the gates and cast Eteocles out of the city"). Statius confirms the Furies' responsibility for the ensuing duel as he sets the scene for the fratricide:

> iamque in puluereum Furiis hortantibus aequor
> prosiliunt, sua quemque comes stimulatque monetque.
> frena tenant ipsae phalerasque et lucida comunt
> arma manu mixtisque iubas serpentibus augent.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 11.403–406

> And now with the Furies urging them on they leap out onto the dusty field and his own comrade [i.e., his own attendant Fury] provokes and advises each brother. The sisters themselves hold the reins and arrange the horses' ornaments and the brothers' shining weapons by hand; they entwine their serpents amid the horses' manes.

The infernal sisters thus work together to bring their separate champions onto the field of battle appropriately arrayed for the climactic combat. Even then, however, their task is threatened by an unexpected intervention on the part of the divine personification of Pietas (11.457–482), who causes the brothers to

waiver until Tisiphone rudely sends her packing (11.482–496) with the boast that the field and the day belong to the infernal sisters (11.485–486): *cede, improba*:[39] *noster / hic campus nosterque dies* ("Get lost, shameless one! This is our battlefield and our day").

Once the Theban brothers are finally engaged in single combat, the poet has no further need of the Furies (*nec iam opus est Furiis*, 11.537). For as he shows, the brothers have internalized the infernal sisters' fury (*furores*, 11.538; cf. *furens*, 11.539). But Statius acknowledges the crucial role of the hellish fiends in bringing them to the duel when he salutes the dead brothers on their way to Tartarus:

> ite truces animae funestaque Tartara leto
> polluite et cunctas Erebi consumite poenas!
> uosque malis hominum, Stygiae, iam parcite, diuae:
> omnibus in terris scelus hoc omnique sub aeuo
> uiderit una dies, monstrumque infame futuris
> excidat, et soli memorent haec proelia reges.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 11.574–579

> Go savage souls, infect infernal Tartarus with your deaths, and use up all the penalties of Erebos! You too, Stygian goddesses, now spare men's ills: let one day have witnessed this crime in all places and for all time, let the infamous portent fall from the memory of future generations and kings alone recall these battles.

In apostrophizing the Furies, the poet underlines once again the unity of purpose with which they accomplish the brothers' fratricide. While Tisiphone acts alone throughout much of the epic, Statius emphasizes that the climactic duel of the battle is the product of both Furies' handiwork. His address to the infernal sisters here confirms the commonality of purpose with which they act, and which he has recorded with careful symmetry in alternating scenes, throughout the eleventh book. Tisiphone and Megaera can thus be seen to complement, on the divine plane, the poets' representation of the mortal sisters at Thebes and Argos. They do not indulge in deception of any kind with one another, working wholeheartedly together to advance an agenda that requires them to engage one another as a "foe" (*inimica*, 11.112). Their mutual

39 Only in Statius' fratricidal epic, where the gods of the Underworld hold sway and Olympian Jupiter has abdicated, could Pietas, the distinguishing virtue of Aeneas in Vergil's *Aeneid*, be invoked as *improba*: see Dominik (1994).

rivalry is harmoniously embraced and executed with the full awareness of their common purpose. In this regard, they illustrate very clearly the Theban mythic imperative of mutual rivalry. Unlike Antigone and Ismene, who may deceive one another about their feelings, but like Antigone and Argia, Tisiphone and Megaera work openly with one another to accomplish their shared goal of bringing the Theban brothers to fratricide on the battlefield even if that shared purpose requires them to oppose one another in battle. Statius brings an unparalleled level of imagistic care and thematic artistry to his depiction of the bond between sisters, both mortal and immortal.

Silius Italicus' *Punica*

Throughout the *Punica*, Silius depicts the force of Dido's personality on her compatriots, especially Hannibal, even from beyond the grave, as the Flavian poet pays homage to the power of Vergil's portrait of the Carthaginian queen. Of particular interest is Silius' depiction of the relationship between Dido and her sister Anna, whom he represents in *Punica* 8 as the Italian river goddess Anna Perenna (following Ovid, *Fast.* 3.523–656). In a prelude to the Battle of Cannae, Silius depicts Juno exhorting Anna to summon her kinsman Hannibal (*sanguine cognato iuuenis*, Sil. 8.30) against the Roman troops. Anna's response articulates the competing claims on her loyalty that Juno's demand invites:[40]

> tum diua, indigetis castis contermina lucis:
> 'haud,' inquit, 'tua ius nobis praecepta morari.
> sit fas, sit tantum, quaeso, retinere fauorem
> antiquae patriae mandataque magna sororis,
> quamquam inter Latios Annae stet numen honores.'
>
> Sil. 8.39–43

> Then the goddess, whose dwelling borders on the sacred grove of the native god, said "By no means is it right for me to delay discharging your precepts. Let it be right, only let it be right, I beg, to keep the good will of my ancient fatherland and discharge the great commands of my sister, even though Anna's godhead holds a place amid those honoured by the Latins."

40 I cite the text of Silius' *Punica* from Delz (1987); translations are my own, though I have consulted Duff (1934).

Anna recognizes the incompatibility of her loyalties to both Carthaginian past and Roman present entailed by Juno's request,[41] and prioritizes the bond with her sister Dido in accepting Juno's bidding. Silius then recounts Anna's history in order to elucidate the Roman adoption of Dido's sister as a local deity (8.46–47): *cur Sarrana dicent Oenotri numina templo, / regnisque Aeneadum germana colatur Elissae* ("why should the Italians ordain a Phoenician divinity with a temple, and worship Dido's sister in the kingdoms of Aeneas' people?").[42]

Throughout his recital of Anna's history, Silius follows Vergil in his emphasis on her love and loyalty to her sister Dido. Although Anna flees Carthage "before her sister's pyre is cold" (*et tepido fugit Anna rogo*, 8.55), she bitterly regrets her failure to die with her sister (8.65–66): *ergo agitur pelago, diuis inimica sibique, / quod se non dederit comitem in suprema sorori* ("and so she is driven over the main, hating the gods and hating herself, because she had not dedicated herself to her sister as a companion in her final hour"; cf. 8.82–83). When, through a sequence of incredible coincidences, she washes ashore at Aeneas' palace in Latium and recounts Dido's sad death to her sister's erstwhile husband, she emphasizes her own desire to alleviate her sister's suffering upon Aeneas' departure:

> 'nigro forte Ioui, cui tertia regna laborant,
> atque atri sociae thalami noua sacra parabam,
> quis aegram mentem et trepidantia corda leuaret
> infelix germana tori, furuasque trahebam
> ipsa manu, properans ad uisa pianda, bidentes …'
> Sil. 8.116–120

> "It happened that I was preparing strange rites for the dark lord to whom the third realm belongs and the partner of his black bed, with which to lighten my lovelorn sister's sick mind and fearful heart, and I was dragging dark sheep with my own hand, hastening to expiate a vision …"

Anna justifies her recourse to infernal rites as a result of the appearance of Dido's husband Sychaeus to her in a dream, to claim his former wife in death (8.121–125). Like the Vergilian Dido, the Silian Anna is devoted to black magic, as

41 On Anna's dilemmas of loyalty, see Ganiban (2010) 93.

42 On this passage, see Spaltenstein (1986) 501–512, ad loc.; and see further Santini (1991) 5–62; Dietrich (2004) 2–7; Ariemma (2010) 241–247; Ganiban (2010) 91–96; and Keith (2010b) 365–366.

Silius confirms her unanimity of feeling and action with her sister (cf. *unanima soror*, *A.* 4.8). Again like the Vergilian Dido, however, the Silian Anna finds that her rites fail. She discovers Dido dead by her own hand and tries to join her in death:

> accepi infelix dirisque exterrita fatis,
> ora manu lacerans, lymphato regia cursu
> tecta peto celsosque gradus euadere nitor.
> ter diro fueram conata incumbere ferro,
> ter cecidi exanimae membris reuoluta sororis.
>
> Sil. 8.152–156

> Unhappy, I heard the cries and, terrified by her dread fate, I scratched my cheeks with my hand, sought the royal hall in a frenzy, and struggled to climb the lofty steps. Three times I had tried to throw myself on the terrible sword; three times I fainted, prostrate over the limbs of my dead sister.

Silius' repeated emphasis on Anna's wish that she had died with her sister confirms Vergil's characterization of her as *unanima soror*, and explains her willingness to do Juno's bidding as arising from her primary loyalty to her sister and fatherland rather than her adoptive home in Italy. The emotional bond between the sisters, Silius shows, lingers long after Dido's terrible death. Nor is this bond one-sided: Silius' Dido returns Anna's love and loyalty in full, warning her sister (in another prophetic dream) of the treachery of Aeneas' new wife Lavinia (8.164–176). As recent scholarship has highlighted, the contrasts Dido notes between her good faith, on the one hand, and the deceptions of Laomedon's line and the traps set by Lavinia, on the other, redescribe the Roman stereotype of Carthaginian duplicity from the Punic perspective.[43] But these very contrasts also underline the expectation of loyalty between sisters, such as that which animates Medea in her dealings with the disguised Juno of *Argonautica* 6 and informs the exchange of confidences between Antigone and Ismene in *Thebaid* 8.

Anna's dream ends with Dido counseling her to find safety in the river Numicius (8.179–181), where "the Nymphs will gladly receive [her] in their sacred stream" (*te sacra excipient hilares in flumina Nymphae*, 8.182). Dido addresses her as *germana* ("full sister", 8.181) and promises her everlasting glory as an

43 Ganiban (2010) 95.

Italian deity (*aeternumque Italis numen celebrabere in oris*, 8.183). Terrified, as before, by a prophetic dream, Anna immediately acts on her sister's advice, throwing herself in the river.[44] There Aeneas' retainers track her footprints and see a vision of her in the midst of her new 'sisters', the river nymphs: *tum sedibus imis / inter caeruleas uisa est residere sorores / Sidonis et placido Teucros affarier ore* ("then the Sidonian stranger was seen sitting in the river's depths with the cerulean sisters, and seemed to address the Trojans with peaceful mouth", 8.197–199). Silius wittily underlines Anna's conventional literary representation as the incarnation of sororal love and loyalty, by showing her embraced by a new group of 'sisters', even after her transformation from a Phoenician exile into an Italian river goddess.

Silius' vignette crystalizes the themes that characterize the emotional bond between sisters in Flavian epic. Anna's love for her sister (like Dido's for her) lasts beyond the grave and even motivates her flight from Carthage to Latium and then from Aeneas' palace to the river Numicius. The complex play of loyalty and deception in this passage reflects not only Carthaginian distrust of the Romans (and vice versa), but also the deep and abiding expectation of love and loyalty between sisters. Anna trusts her vision not only of Juno but also of the dead Dido (in her dream), precisely because of her love for and faith in her sister. But Silius also shows how the very strength of the emotional bond between the sisters may open up the relationship to manipulation and deception, as Juno trades on Anna's loyalty to her long dead sister to manipulate her into encouraging Hannibal's attack on Cannae (8.205–206).

All three Flavian epicists explore the strength of the emotional bond between sisters in epics that put family relationships—and their deformation—at the heart of the events of myth and history.[45] Valerius extends the manipulative dynamics of Medea's relationship with her sister Chalciope to show Medea herself succumbing to the disguised Juno's deception, while Silius takes Juno's duplicity still further by depicting her openly trading on Anna's lasting love for her sister Dido in order to manipulate Anna into encouraging her kinsman Hannibal to fight the Romans at Cannae. Statius too explores intimate scenes of the exchange of confidences between sisters, yet even Antigone and Ismene are not above deceiving one another. Paradoxically, the sisters who deal most loyally and straightforwardly with one another in the *Thebaid* are the hellish

44 The whole scene is closely modelled on Ennius' account of Ilia's dream and subsequent drowning in the Anio in *Annales* 1, on which see Krevans (1993); Connors (1994); Keith (2000) 42–46; and Elliott (2007).

45 On family and state in Flavian epic, see Bernstein (2008) and, in Silius, (2010).

Furies Tisiphone and Megaera, whose goal of inciting Oedipus' sons to mutual fratricide brings Statius' poem to its infernal climax. Flavian epic offers little hope for the families enmeshed in the crises they chart, with the result that even sisterly love and loyalty is shown to be vulnerable to abuse by deception and manipulation.

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Burial and Lament in Flavian Epic: Mothers, Fathers, Children

Antony Augoustakis

Epic poetry from Homer onwards and with numerous variations, innovations, and permutations has traditionally celebrated the κλέα ἀνδρῶν.[1] That epic heroes often worry about their posthumous fame is a well-known topos from Helen's pronouncement in *Iliad* 6 that the Trojan War and its protagonists will become a song (ὡς καὶ ὀπίσσω / ἀνθρώποισι πελώμεθ' ἀοίδιμοι ἐσσομένοισι, "so that even in days to come we may be a song for me that are yet to be," *Il.* 6.357–358) to Hannibal's haughty statement at the end of the *Punica* that he will haunt the dreams of Roman matronae for many generations to come (*ut me Dardaniae matres atque Itala tellus, / dum uiuam, exspectent nec pacem pectore norint*, "that Roman mothers and the people of Italy dread my coming while I live, and never know peace of mind," Sil. 17.614–615).[2] For sure, in the epic tradition, burial and lament upon death have long been employed as means towards memorialization and posthumous remembrance: consider, for instance, the end of the *Iliad* with the burial of Hector[3] or the end of the *Thebaid* with the lament and burial of the Argive dead. In recent years, and since the inception and revival of Flavian studies at the turn of the previous century, female lament has occupied a prominent role in literary criticism of the period: based on the ending scene of Statius' *Thebaid*, scholars have argued that the poet opts to end his poem with a note of desperation, poetic powerlessness, facing the impasse set before him:[4]

1 This is part of a longer study in preparation on "Death, Burial, and Ritual in Flavian Epic." I would like to thank Nikoletta Manioti for organizing the St Andrews workshop in June 2014, the participants for offering valuable comments, and the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to many important parallels.

2 For Greek and Latin texts and (modified) translations, I have made use of the following: for Homer, Murray and Wyatt (1999); for Silius, Delz (1987) and Duff (1934); for Statius, Hill (1996) and Shackleton Bailey (2003); for Valerius Flaccus, Ehlers (1980) and Mozley (1934).

3 The role of lament in Homer has long enjoyed the attention of critics; see, e.g., Tsagalis (2004) and Suter (2008) for Greek tragedy; especially in Greek tragedy, lament constitutes not only an outlet from grief but also, and most importantly, perpetuates anguish and anger needed to motivate revenge (Seaford (1994), esp. 74–105).

4 E.g., Dietrich (1999), Bernstein (2008) 101–104, and Augoustakis (2010) 75–91 with further bibliography.

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is the poem trespassing into the territory of elegy, and if so, how does one end a poem about civil war on a positive note? Does burial, cremation in this case, constitute and provide satisfactory closure to an epic poem that celebrates the nefarious, criminal fratricide and extinction of the Theban *oikos*? In this chapter, I would like to revisit a few episodes in Flavian epic to examine the meaning of female lament and of bereavement in conjunction with burial, analyzing the Flavian poets' emphasis on female figures and their offspring, but with a significant modification: I bring into the discussion the role of male lament in Statius' *Thebaid* to investigate how it confirms and consolidates male power as tyrannical and autocratic. In other words, the various passages examined will elucidate how Flavian epic prominently foregrounds episodes of death, burial, and lament as markers in the narrative of the darkest aspects of monarchical, despotic, and tyrannical power.

Motherhood, Burial, and Lament

In Flavian epic, as part of the story or as a digression from the narrative, babies, young boys (and children in general), die and are buried by their parents. In Silius' *Punica*, we find showcased the mythological digression of Pyrene and her baby son, while in Statius, the king of Argos narrates the similar story of Psamathe and Linus from the city's distant past. In addition, in the *Punica*, in the civil war at Saguntum, the mothers witness the death of their own offspring to avoid being caught by the Carthaginians; in Statius' civil war poem, the baby Opheltes is killed by a snake because of the neglectful nurse, Hypsipyle, who is distracted by the arrival of the soldiers and is prompted to narrate her own civil war story of the massacre on Lemnos. As we shall see, death, bereavement, and burial are employed by the poets to underscore female powerlessness in the face of male authority, while at the same time the poets stress the impossibilities associated with transgression of boundaries: the male protagonists are presented as directly or indirectly affected by the development of the narrative, as their own destruction or demise is equally and frequently foreshadowed as part of such a transgression.[5]

Let us look at the two digressive narratives first, of Pyrene and Psamathe. While Hannibal crosses the Pyrenees after his victorious sack of Saguntum, Silius seizes the opportunity to look into the aetiology of the name of the moun-

5 On the transgression of boundaries in the context of family bonds in Flavian epic see also Newlands in this volume.

tain chain.[6] Pyrene is forced to take action upon rape: Silius punctuates the narrative with short descriptive phrases that mark the speed of the narrative: having just killed a monster, Hercules rapes the girl, a monstrous baby birth ensues, and Pyrene herself is torn to pieces by the *ferae*:[7]

> nomen Bebrycia duxere a uirgine colles,
> hospitis Alcidae crimen, qui, sorte laborum
> Geryonae peteret cum longa tricorporis arua,
> possessus Baccho saeua Bebrycis in aula
> lugendam formae sine uirginitate reliquit
> Pyrenen, letique deus, si credere fas est,
> causa fuit leti miserae deus. edidit aluo
> namque ut serpentem patriasque exhorruit iras,
> confestim dulces liquit turbata penates.
> tum noctem Alcidae solis plangebat in antris
> et promissa uiri siluis narrabat opacis,
> donec maerentem ingratos raptoris amores
> tendentemque manus atque hospitis arma uocantem
> diripuere ferae. laceros Tirynthius artus,
> dum remeat uictor, lacrimis perfudit et amens
> palluit inuento dilectae uirginis ore.
> at uoce Herculea percussa cacumina montis
> intremuere iugis: maesto clamore ciebat
> Pyrenen, scopulique omnes ac lustra ferarum
> Pyrenen resonant. tumulo tum membra reponit
> supremum inlacrimans, nec honos intercidit aeuo,
> defletumque tenent montes per saecula nomen.
>
> Sil. 3.420–441

> These mountains took their name from a virgin girl, daughter of king Bebryx, a victim of Hercules when he was a guest there. When he was seeking the distant fields of three-bodied Geryon, as a part of his labours, in the savage court of Bebryx, overcome by wine, he abandoned Pyrene, robbed of her virginity, her beauty a cause for mourning. Thus, the god, if it is proper to believe this, became the cause of death for the poor maiden.

6 Spaltenstein (1986) 231–232, Augoustakis (2003) for further bibliography on Silius' sources and the question of Herculean heroism in Flavian epic, and Tipping (2010) 20–21, 72, 79.

7 See Keith (2000) 56–57 on the suppression of the details of the rape and the emphasis on the violence of death, an analogic or developmental relationship between rape and mutilation.

> For when she gave birth to a serpent from her womb, fearing the anger of her own father, disturbed she fled her sweet house at once. Then, in lonely caves she kept lamenting the night she spent with Alcides and narrating the promises of the man to the dark forests, until wild beasts tore her apart while mourning for the dishonest love of her ravisher and stretching forth her hands and imploring the aid of her guest. When the Tirynthian hero returned as conqueror, he shed many tears over the lacerated limbs of Pyrene, and in despair he turned pale when he found the head of the maid he had loved. Then the high mountains-tops, smitten by his cries, were shaken; with loud lament he called Pyrene by name; and all the cliffs and haunts of wild beasts echoed the name of Pyrene. Then, with a last tribute of tears, he laid her body in the grave. And time shall never eclipse her fame; for the mountains retain for ever the name that caused such grief.

I would like to call attention to the prominence of sound in Silius' description: Pyrene laments her predicament (*plangebat*), wherein lament is coupled with narrative (*narrabat*); it is not just shrieking but a narrative song that 'celebrates' the events of the fatal night (*noctem Alcidae*) and the empty promises (*promissa uiri*). Remembrance does not bring consolation necessarily but results in death. Likewise, Hercules' realization of the consequences of his *crimen* leads to lament (*lacrimis*, *clamore*, *uoce Herculea*) and the repetition of the name of the deceased results in the 'assumption' of Pyrene into the geography of the place (*Pyrenen resonant*). As I have argued elsewhere, the 'ignorant' recipient of this story is Hannibal, who crosses the Pyrenees while we listen to Silius' narrative of the laceration of Pyrene and the mountains resounding with the princess' name, as "the historical time has been absorbed and replaced by the mythological insertion of Pyrene's tale and its message for the reader about the impossibilities created by trespassing the limits apportioned to humans."[8]

A similar story of maternal bereavement and death is narrated by Adrastus, king of Argos, to his dinner-guests and future sons-in-law, Polynices and Tydeus, prominent protagonists of the fratricidal Theban poem. The death of Psamathe's exposed son, Linus, precipitates the creation of a monster, Poine, as a consolation for the mourning Apollo:[9]

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8 Augoustakis (2003) 253.

9 On the Psamathe episode, see most recently McNelis (2007) 25–49, Hulls (2013), and Keith (2013) with further bibliography, as well as Pache (2004) 66–73.

huic primis et pubem ineuntibus annis
mira decore pios seruabat nata penates
intemerata toris. felix, si Delia numquam
furta nec occultum Phoebo sociasset amorem!
namque ut passa deum Nemeaei ad fluminis undam,
bis quinos plena cum fronte resumeret orbes
Cynthia, sidereum Latonae feta nepotem
edidit; ac poenae metuens (neque enim ille coactis
donasset thalamis ueniam pater) auia rura
eligit ac natum saepta inter ouilia furtim
montiuago pecoris custodi mandat alendum.
non tibi digna, puer, generis cunabula tanti
gramineos dedit herba toros et uimine querno
texta domus; clausa arbutei sub cortice libri
membra tepent, suadetque leues caua fistula somnos,
et pecori commune solum. sed fata nec illum
concessere larem; uiridi nam caespite terrae
proiectum temere et patulo caelum ore trahentem
dira canum rabies morsu depasta cruento
disicit. hic uero attonitas ut nuntius aures
matris adit, pulsi ex animo genitorque pudorque
et metus; ipsa ultro saeuis plangoribus amens
tecta replet, uacuumque ferens uelamine pectus
occurrit confessa patri; nec motus et atro
imperat (infandum!) cupientem occumbere leto.
sero memor thalami maestae solacia morti,
Phoebe, paras monstrum infandis Acheronte sub imo
conceptum Eumenidum thalamis …

Stat. *Theb.* 1.571–598

He [sc. Crotopus] had a daughter in his virtuous home, in early years scarce past childhood, of marvellous beauty, a virgin inviolate. Happy had she been if she had never shared Delian dalliance and Phoebus' secret love. For by the water of Nemea's stream she suffered the god, and when Cynthia resumed her full countenance for the tenth time, gave birth to a child, Latona's starlike grandson. Fearing chastisement (for no mercy would that father have shown in forgiveness of forced union), she chooses a pathless tract and amid the sheepfolds secretly consigns her son to a hillfaring keeper of the flock for him to rear. The grass gave the boy his bed, cradle unworthy of his high birth, and his

> house was woven of oaken withies. His limbs were snug in a wrapping of arbutus bark, a hollow pipe lulls him to light slumbers, he shares the ground with the sheep. But not even such a home did the Fates permit. For as he lay stretched carelessly on the green sod, wide-mouthed to drink the sky, the fell rage of dogs, feeding with bloody bite, tears him asunder. But when the news of it reached his mother's shocked ears, driven from her mind were father, shame, and fear. Unprompted she fills the house with wild laments, distraught, and with breast uncovered comes to her father and confesses all. He pities her not, but gives order (oh unspeakable!) that she meet the black death she desires. Too late Phoebus remembers their union. To solace her sad end he gets him a monster conceived in the Furies' gruesome chambers at Acheron's bottom.

The pipe lulls Linus to sleep, but the sound proves dangerous as it invites dogs to devour the exposed baby son of Psamathe. Lament (*saeuis plangoribus*) then is followed by death, not at the hands of beasts, but as a result of the cruel father's edict (*imperat*). Apollo's revenge by means of the newly created monster, Poine, showcases how excessive, albeit a little too late, grief wreaks havoc on the city of Argos, just like Hercules' crossing of the Alps, and by extension Hannibal's similar route, will destroy the surrounding landscape in terms of transgression, violation, and bloody death. Bebryx and Crotopus prove to be cruel, tyrannical fathers, whose actions, however, have long lasting repercussions in unleashing the recycling of further despotic, autocratic behaviour.

The coupling of the lulling, rhythmical lullaby and of lament is indicative of Statius' intentions of the denouement of the poem, as the pattern is repeated in the death of Opheltes:[10] the story of Psamathe and Linus prefigures the central digression of the poem, with Hypsipyle and Opheltes taking center stage, even though we do not have exact symmetry, as we do for instance in the case of Pyrene and Psamathe.[11] Hypsipyle recycles the violence learned from home,

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10 E.g., Ganiban (2013) notes the echoes in Opheltes' funeral, where the bier is described just like Linus' 'cradle': *tristibus interea ramis teneraque cupresso / damnatus flammae torus et puerile feretrum / texitur: ima uirent agresti stramina cultu; / proxima gramineis operosior area sertis, / et picturatus morituris floribus agger* ... ("Meanwhile a couch doomed to flame, a childish bier, is woven from sad branches of tender cypress. The lowest part is strewn with rustic greenery, next is a space more elaborate with herbal wreaths and a mound decked with flowers soon to die," Stat. *Theb.* 6.54–58).

11 Hulls (2013) discusses in detail the points of contact between the episodes in Silius and Statius to show that "the process of rape, destruction and dismemberment within this wild

from the island of Lemnos, thus unleashing a new cycle of renewed violence in Nemea and by extension Thebes; but Hypsipyle is not the real mother, but rather a nurse to Opheltes, at least seemingly.[12] Eurydice, Opheltes' mother, and Hypsipyle lament the boy but in separate books: Eurydice seems to have competed for a place in Opheltes' heart, and only in death and burial does she become his real mother:

> … nulla ex te gaudia matri.
> illa tuos questus lacrimososque impia risus
> audiit et uocis decerpsit murmura primae.
> illa tibi genetrix semper dum uita manebat,
> nunc ego.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 6.163–167

> Your mother had no joy of you. She, the undutiful, heard your plaints and tearful laughter, she culled the murmurs of your earliest speech. She was your mother always while you lived; I now.

Hypsipyle fulfils all maternal functions before Opheltes' death, whereas upon death the bereft real mother of the baby is left to mourn: order is restored but only as an anomaly, since the mother buries her son, a perversion of nature. And yet, even while Hypsipyle was serving the baby boy as his nurse, we learn from her own lament that the lullaby used to be a *querela*, a prolonged complaint *qua* lament of past toils:

> o mihi desertae natorum dulcis imago,
> Archemore, o rerum et patriae solamen ademptae
> seruitiique decus, qui te, mea gaudia, sontes
> extinxere dei, modo quem digressa reliqui
> lasciuum et prono uexantem gramina cursu?
> heu ubi siderei uultus? ubi uerba ligatis
> imperfecta sonis risusque et murmura soli
> intellecta mihi? quotiens tibi Lemnon et Argo
> sueta loqui et longa somnum suadere querela!

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setting becomes a complex metaphor for the interpretive reprocessing of sign-systems—in other words the act of literary appropriation and interpretation."

12 On Hypsipyle the 'mother', see Augoustakis (2010) 37–61 and on Hypsipyle the 'narrator', most recently Walter (2014) 208–234. On Hypsipyle's roles in the *Thebaid* see also Heslin in this volume.

sic equidem luctus solabar et ubera paruo
iam materna dabam ...

Stat. *Theb.* 5.608–618

Sweet semblance of the children who have forsaken me, Archemorus, solace of my lost estate and country, pride of my servitude, what guilty gods took your life, my joy, whom but now in parting I left at play, crushing the grasses as you hastened in your forward crawl? Ah, where is your starry face? Where your words unfinished in constricted sounds, and laughs and gurgles that only I could understand? How often would I talk to you of Lemnos and the Argo and lull you to sleep with my long tale of woe! So I would console my sorrow and give the little one a mother's breasts.

Hypsipyle is the only person who could make sense of baby talk, who can put Opheltes to sleep by means of (epic) song, and the one who ultimately becomes the cause of death. This once innocent lullaby was synonymous to lament, and as such it now resurfaces within the formal dirge/lament upon the baby's death.

At least in the first half of the poem, Statius denies any closure by means of lament, even when there is seemingly closural act by means of burial and commemoration, as in the case of Hypsipyle's fake funeral for her rescued father, Thoas. As she makes it clear in her long digressive narrative on massacre in Lemnos, Hypsipyle emphasizes the hasty burial and the complete lack of ritual lamentation:

... patuere furores
nocturni, lucisque nouae formidine cunctis
(quamquam inter similes) subitus pudor; impia terrae
infodiunt scelera aut festinis ignibus urunt.

Stat. *Theb.* 5.298–301

The madness of the night showed plain, and in fear of the new light sudden shame was upon all of them, though all were in like case. They bury their impious crimes in earth or burn them in hasty fires.

And even when lamentation takes place, it is stressed as a reversal of usual norms:

flet super aequaeuum exarmata Lycaste
Cydimon, heu similes perituro in corpore uultus
aspiciens floremque genae et quas finxerat auro

ipsa comas, cum saeua parens iam coniuge fuso
astitit impellitque minis atque inserit ensem.
ut fera, quae rabiem placido desueta magistro
tardius arma mouet stimulisque et uerbere crebro
in mores negat ire suos, sic illa iacenti
incidit undantemque sinu conlapsa cruorem
excipit et laceros premit in noua uulnera crines.

Stat. *Theb.* 5.226–235

Lycaste weeps disarmed over her brother of equal age, Cydimus, watching the face alas so like her own upon his doomed body, and the bloom on his cheek and the locks she had herself twined with gold, when their savage mother, who had already slain her husband, takes stand beside her, urging her with threats and putting the sword in her hands. Like a wild beast that under a gentle master has lost the habit of fury and is slow to show fight, refusing to resume its old ways despite goads and many a lash, so she falls upon him as he lies and collapsing receives his streaming blood in her bosom and presses her torn hair into the fresh wounds.

Lament precedes the crime: whereas the mother should be the mourner, she serves now as the perpetrator of *nefas*. The traditional offering of shorn hair is now exploited to describe the sister's effort to cover up the brother's *noua uulnera*. The mother orders her daughter and prods her on to fratricide, as Statius employs this narrative as the prototype of the upcoming Theban climax.

In Valerius Flaccus' version of the Lemnian massacre, which Statius follows, albeit substantially changed,[13] emphasis is laid on the reversal of norms, as women transgress the boundaries set by their gender (*dura in limine coniunx*):

hoc soror, hoc coniunx propiorque hoc nata parensque
saeva ualet prensosque toris mactatque trahitque
femineum genus, immanes quos sternere Bessi
nec Geticae potuere manus aut aequoris irae.
his cruor in thalamis et anhela in pectore fumant
uulnera seque toris misero luctamine trunci
deuoluunt. diras aliae ad fastigia taedas
iniciunt adduntque domos. pars ignibus atris

13 On the relationship between the two narratives, see Augoustakis (2012) with further bibliography.

effugiunt propere, sed dura in limine coniunx
obsidet et uiso repetunt incendia ferro.
ast aliae Thressas labem causamque furorum
diripiunt: mixti gemitus clamorque precantum
barbarus ignotaeque implebant aethera uoces.

V. Fl. 2.229–241

Such the savagery of sister, of wife, of closer of kin, of daughter and of mother; caught in their beds woman drags forth and butchers the men whom neither the huge Bessi nor the Getic armies nor the anger of the sea could overcome. Blood flows in the chambers, while in every breast there is a bubbling, smoking wound, and struggling pitifully the bodies roll from their beds. Some of the women hurl torches of destruction upon the roofs and add their homes to the ruin; some few men make haste to escape from the smoking fires, but their way is barred at the threshold by an unyielding wife, and at the sight of the sword they rush back into the flames. Others rend and tear the Thracian slaves, their men's undoing and the cause of these frenzied deeds; mingled groans, barbaric cries of supplication and unintelligible voices filled the air.

Consider the incineration of the entire homes as a form of cremation, since the husbands reach the threshold of their abode only to find the *dura coniunx* awaiting there, and therefore have no other recourse but to rush back and thus be burned alive. Moreover, the frenzied lamentations of the Thracian slaves once again in a strange manner substitute the traditional lament of burial, a dissonant voice to the expected ritual. No mention of proper burial is made in Valerius: upon saving her father, Hypsipyle becomes the queen; no hasty burials, no lament, no remorse. In both Statius and Valerius then, the massacre on Lemnos is followed by the installation of a new, tyrannical regime, inasmuch as male rule has been elided, order has been reversed, the world is turned topsy-turvy, albeit for a little while, since Hypsipyle's lie is soon to be uncovered.

But disorder, with the overtones of civil strife, results in haphazard burial or semblance of burial in Silius' Saguntine war as well.[14] The Saguntines commit mass suicide, just before victorious Hannibal enters the city like a hungry lion. Identity is a complicated matter in the episode, as Silius privileges the confusing state of indiscriminate slaughter:

14 On Saguntum, see Augoustakis (2010) 113–136 and n. 46 with further bibliography; also Bernstein in this volume.

uos etiam primo gemini cecidistis in aeuo,
Eurymedon fratrem et fratrem mentite Lycorma,
cuncta pares; dulcisque labor sua nomina natis
reddere et in uultu genetrici stare suorum.
iam fixus iugulo culpa te soluerat ensis,
Eurymedon, inter miserae lamenta senectae,
dumque malis turbata parens deceptaque uisis
'quo ruis? huc ferrum' clamat 'conuerte, Lycorma,'
ecce simul iugulum perfoderat ense Lycormas.
sed magno 'quinam, Eurymedon, furor iste?' sonabat
cum planctu geminaeque notis decepta figurae
funera mutato reuocabat nomine mater,
donec transacto tremebunda per ubera ferro
tunc etiam ambiguos cecidit super inscia natos.

Sil. 2.636–649

Twin brethren also, alike in every point, Eurymedon and Lycormas, each an exact likeness of the other, were slain there in their prime. To their mother it had been a sweet perplexity to name her sons correctly and to be uncertain of her own children's features. The sword that pierced the throat of Eurymedon, while the poor old mother lamented, had already cleared him of guilt; and while she, distraught with sorrow and mistaking whom she saw, cried out, "What mean you, madman? Turn your sword against me, Lycormas," lo! Lycormas had already stabbed himself in the throat. But she cried aloud: "Eurymedon, what madness is this?"—and the mother, misled by the likeness of the twins, called back her dead sons by wrong names; at last, driving the steel through her own quivering breast, she sank down over the sons whom even then she could not distinguish.

The lamenting, confused mother witnesses the death of the twins, *inter miserae lamenta senectae*. She "is unable to identify her sons properly and thus annuls the ancestral, Roman custom of *conclamatio*, the calling of the dead person's name three times, rendering it futile in this case."[15] The mass death of the population is described as *infelix obitus* as fire consumes everything, the result of a civil war raging in town, as the Saguntines abandon their former identity as colonists from Greece and Italy:

15 Augoustakis (2010) 134.

… furit ensis et ignis,
quique caret flamma, scelerum est locus. erigit atro
nigrantem fumo rogus alta ad sidera nubem.
ardet in excelso proceri uertice montis
arx intacta prius bellis (hinc Punica castra
litoraque et totam soliti spectare Saguntum),
ardent tecta deum. resplendet imagine flammae
aequor, et in tremulo uibrant incendia ponto …
semiambusta iacet nullo discrimine passim
infelix obitus, permixto funere, turba …

Sil. 2.657–664, 681–682

Fire and sword run riot, and any spot that is not burning is a scene of crime. The pyre sends up aloft a sable cloud of black smoke. On the high top of the lofty mountain the citadel that former wars had spared is blazing—from this point the citizens were wont to see the Punic camp and the shore and the whole of Saguntum—the temples of the gods are blazing. The sea is lit up by the reflection of the fire, and the conflagration quivers on the restless water … Unhappy in their death, half-consumed by the fire, without distinction or order, the bodies of the people lay pell-mell, one upon the other.

The lament of their death as *infelix obitus*, however, is quickly remedied by the poet, who hastens to add a eulogy, an obituary, as he addresses the souls of the dead in their journey to Elysium as *decus terrarum* at the conclusion of the book (2.697). It has been argued that Silius fashions this pyre as a symbol of the breakdown of the ties between Romans and Saguntines: before death, Saguntine identity is incinerated.[16] Silius emphasizes the emptiness of the city when the Carthaginians storm the citadel but also underscores the unleashing of Hannibal's tyrannical *ira* and *furor* as a result.

Fatherhood, Burial, and Lament

As I have observed at the outset of this chapter, while particular attention has been devoted to female lament as closural technique in the *Thebaid*, the lament of the poem's fathers—particularly royal males—has been understudied. To

16 See Augoustakis (2010), esp. 130–131.

be sure, at the end of the *Thebaid* Statius privileges female lament as means of enriching the epic tradition and "grafting" the otherwise masculine genre of epic with elegiac overtones. Especially, the ending of the poem has been interpreted as a personal statement by the Flavian poet who reaches an impasse when it comes to narrating the lament of the Argive women in Thebes after the resolution of Creon's cruel edict forbidding the cremation of the Seven:

> non ego, centena si quis mea pectora laxet
> uoce deus, tot busta simul uulgique ducumque,
> tot pariter gemitus dignis conatibus aequem:
> turbine quo sese caris instrauerit audax
> ignibus Euadne fulmenque in pectore magno
> quaesierit; quo more iacens super oscula saeui
> corporis infelix excuset Tydea coniunx;
> ut saeuos narret uigiles Argia sorori;
> Arcada, quo planctu genetrix Erymanthia clamet,
> Arcada, consumpto seruantem sanguine uultus,
> Arcada, quem geminae pariter fleuere cohortes.
> uix nouus ista furor ueniensque implesset Apollo,
> et mea iam longo meruit ratis aequore portum.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 12.797–809

> Were some god to loose my breast in hundred voices I could not in worthy effort do justice to so many pyres of captains and common folk alike, such a chorus of groaning: telling how Evadne boldly strewed herself on beloved flames, seeking the thunderbolt in the mighty breast; in what fashion Tydeus' hapless wife excuses him as she lies over the savage corpse's kisses; how Argia tells her sister of the cruel sentinels; with what lamentation the Erymanthian mother bewails the Arcadian, for whom both armies wept alike. Hardly would a new frenzy and Apollo's coming have discharged the task; and my bark in the wide ocean has already earned her harbour.

By silencing women at the end, Statius consolidates the boundaries of the epic narrative and points to the futility of temporary peace between Thebes and Argos by alluding to the coming of the Epigonoi, an event that falls outside the perimeter of his poem. But precisely because death and burial become prominent episodes in the poem's narrative, one must pay equal attention to the grieving fathers in the *Thebaid*; after all, as we learn from the last poem of *Siluae* 5, Statius himself was a grieving father towards the end of his life. The

long laments of Creon, Oedipus and Lycurgus converge in their refusal to take any responsibility for their sons' death, as the fathers desire or threaten to work violence on others or themselves. That sense of superiority reproduces itself, as, for example, Creon forbids the burial of the Argive men—a behavior betraying escalating arrogance that virtually necessitates that the grieving women have the last word, if the poem is to end at all. This type of fatherhood is ultimately rejected by the poem's resolution and Theseus' intervention,[17] even though the looming return of the Epigonoi leaves Statius' reader with the bitter feeling of sons trying to emulate or even exceed their parents' cruelty and savagery in a never-ending cycle of violence.

First, let us look at Lycurgus, the father of Opheltes, who bursts into a violent attack against Hypsipyle, whom he wants to put to death, before the Argives intervene to save her. The mention of common ancestry, and the mutual ties between Argos and Nemea, as invoked by the seer Amphiaraus, prove effective momentarily to stave off this civil-war-like conflict.

> at non magnanimo pietas ignaua Lycurgo:
> fortior ille malis, lacrimasque insana resorbet
> ira patris, longo rapit arua morantia passu
> uociferans: 'illa autem ubinam, cui parua cruoris
> laetaue damna mei? uiuitne? impellite raptam,
> ferte citi comites; faxo omnis fabula Lemni
> et pater et tumidae generis mendacia sacri
> exciderint.' ibat letumque inferre parabat
> ense furens rapto …
> … 'ne, quaeso! absistite ferro,
> unus auum sanguis …'
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 5.653–661, 669–670

But great-hearted Lycurgus' love for his son is up and doing. It takes strength from calamity: a father's furious anger sucks back his tears, and with long strides he dispatches the fields that stay him, shouting "And where is she to whom spilt blood of mine is a trifle or a pleasure? Does she live? Take her, thrust her, comrades, bring her quickly, I shall make her forget all her rigmarole of Lemnos, and her father, and the lie of race

17 Bessone (2011) promotes a positivist reading of Theseus' role at the end, an opinion I share to a certain degree, except that the image of Theseus the 'savior' is overpowered by the strong lament at the very end.

> divine that she is so proud of." Snatching up a sword and advancing, he was about to deal death in his rage … [Amphiaraus] "Not so, I pray. Put away the steel. Our ancestry is one …"

Lament and consolation, however, lead to an impasse early on in Book 6, when Adrastus tries to console the bereft parent, to no avail:[18]

> ipse, datum quotiens intercisoque tumultu
> conticuit stupefacta domus, solatur Adrastus
> adloquiis genitorem ultro, nunc fata recensens
> resque hominum duras et inexorabile pensum,
> nunc aliam prolem mansuraque numine dextro
> pignora. nondum orsis modus, et lamenta redibant.
> ille quoque adfatus non mollius audit amicos
> quam trucis Ionii rabies clamantia ponto
> uota uirum aut tenues curant uaga fulmina nimbos.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 6.45–53

> Adrastus himself, whenever he has the chance and the noise is suspended and the house lapses into stunned silence, unprompted consoles the father with words of comfort. Now he rehearses destinies and the cruelty of man's condition and the inexorable thread, now speaks of other offspring and children who would remain with heaven's blessing. His speech unfinished, the laments return. Lycurgus too is no more mollified by well-meant words than the rage of fierce Ionian heeds the clamour of men's prayers upon the deep or wandering lightings thin showers.

Note the anapaestic *rabies* in the middle of the penultimate line here; lament is coupled with the rabid violence of nature; resistance to consolation leads to renewal of lament, *lamenta redibant*, thus emphasizing the reversal of norms, since usually lament leads to consolation and closure. A few lines earlier, Eurydice's lament had been described as excessive, surpassing that of a man, *planctus egressa uiriles*, an excellent juxtaposition here of male and female lamentation as competition: *asperior contra planctusque egressa uiriles / exemplo famulas premit hortaturque uolentes / orba parens* … ("fronting him the bereaved

18 See Augoustakis (2010) 58 n. 60 on the change of the Euripidean model and the transfer of lamentation / consolation to men.

mother, more violent than he and lamenting more than man, urges her handmaidens by her example, exhorting them though willing …", 6.33–35).

Fatherly grief pushes Lycurgus to the strong gesture of throwing the emblems of his office as priest of Jupiter on to Opheltes' pyre, in a forceful attack against the father of the gods himself:

> … ac talia fletu
> uerba pio miscens: 'alio tibi, perfide, pacto,
> Iuppiter, hunc crinem uoti reus ante dicaram,
> si pariter uirides nati libare dedisses
> ad tua templa genas; sed non ratus ore sacerdos,
> damnataeque preces; ferat haec, quae dignior, umbra.'
> iam face subiecta primis in frondibus ignis
> exclamat; labor insanos arcere parentes.
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 6.196–203

> … and mingling with parental tears such words as these: "Far otherwise, perfidious Jupiter, had I once consecrated these locks to you, due to discharge the vow should you have granted me to offer my son's youthful cheeks along with them at your temple. But your priest's words were not ratified, his prayer was denied. Let this shade take them who deserves them more." The torch is put, the fire in the lowest branches cries aloud, it is a task to keep back the demented parents.

Excessive grief finds an outlet in Lycurgus' hybristic behavior directed towards Jove, whom he blames for the *damnatae preces*, the annulment of a priest's prayers. Lycurgus' performance here is a rehearsal, a preview, a template for the behavior of other fathers in the poem, as the cycle of civil war violence comes to its climax with the fratricide. As a prototype for Oedipus and Creon, the king of Nemea concentrates those traits that destroy both leaders of Thebes later on in the poem.

Statius' epic is generally characterized by a cycle of repetition or repetitive acts and gestures of intratextuality: another father exhibits traits similar to Lycurgus' behavior in Book 6, this time actually a father-in-law, Adrastus.[19] Before the fratricide, in a desperate attempt to stop the folly of his son-in-law, the king of Argos offers his insignia in exchange for peace, yielding the throne to the powerthirsty Polynices.

19 On the episode, see Ganiban (2007) 167–170.

'... spectabimus ergo hoc,
Inachidae Tyriique, nefas? ubi iura deique?
bella ubi? ne perstate animis. te deprecor, hostis
(quamquam, haec ira sinat, nec tu mihi sanguine longe),
te, gener, et iubeo; sceptri si tanta cupido est,
exuo regales habitus, i, Lernan et Argos
solus habe!' non uerba magis suadentia frangunt
accensos sumptisque semel conatibus obstant ...
ut periisse preces geminoque ad proelia fusos
puluere cornipedes explorarique furentum
in digitis ammenta uidet, fugit omnia linquens,
castra, uiros, generum, Thebas ...

Stat. *Theb.* 11.429–436, 439–442

"Sons of Inachus and Tyrians, shall we then watch this wickedness? Where is right and the gods, where war? Persist not in your passion. I pray you desist, my enemy—though did this anger permit, you too are not far from me in blood; you, my son-in-law, I also command. If you so much desire a scepter, I put off my royal raiment, go, have Lerna and Argos to yourself." His words of persuasion no more change their fiery mood or check their enterprise once resolved ... When he sees his prayers are wasted and the horses galloping to battle in double dust and the madmen fingering their javelin straps, he flees leaving it all behind—camp, men, son-in-law, Thebes ...

Adrastus' gesture is similar but also antithetical to Lycurgus': Lycurgus was acting during a funeral; this is not a funeral of course, not yet, but rather a preparation thereof. Adrastus' indignation at the impasse has no effect whatsoever, an empty gesture before the inevitable *nefas*. Even the mention of common genealogy between Thebans and Argives and the ties that connect rather than separate them bears no fruit: the apostrophes to Eteocles first and then more emphatically to Polynices fall on deaf ears. There is much weight in the gesture of turning to someone and saying, "here they are, take them"! Lycurgus would have dedicated the *insignia* to Jupiter but prefers to burn them together with Opheltes; Adrastus gives them up, even though he knows well that Polynices is never going to pick them up and wear them as a king in the future: this is a futile gesture. Adrastus here forsakes his *insignia* and flees Thebes, *Thebas*; in reality, what he does is that he is leaving the poem altogether.

Statius replicates the episodes of the bereft fathers, Lycurgus and Adrastus, by approximating these fatherly figures to Creon, who cannot stop the self-

sacrificial suicide *qua deuotio* of his son, Menoeceus in Book 10, even after repeated attempts at stalling him (10.689–718).[20] After the suicide, Creon's silent lament gives way to the mother's powerful weeping: *hic uicta genitor lacrimabilis ira / congemit* ("here the father laments with tears, overcoming his anger," 10.791–792). In the beginning of the last book (12.60–104), Creon proceeds with a special cremation for his son (with human sacrifice), separate from the other corpses: he berates Menoeceus' valor but offers the dead body the *insignia* of a king, sharply distinguishing between Menoeceus and Eteocles, by endowing the former with royal status even in death and pronouncing his edict whereby he forbids the burials of the Argive soldiers.

spirantes super inferias, captiua Pelasgum
corpora frenatosque, pater, solacia sorti
bellorum, mactabat equos; his arduus ignis
palpitat, et gemitus tandem erupere paterni:
'o nisi magnanimae nimius te laudis inisset
ardor, Echionios mecum uenerande penates
atque ultra recture puer, uenientia qui nunc
gaudia et ingratum mihi munus acerbas!
tu superum conuexa licet coetusque perenni
(credo equidem) uirtute colas, mihi flebile semper
numen eris; ponant aras excelsaque Thebae
templa dicent: uni fas sit lugere parenti …
et nunc Oedipodi par est fortuna doloris
ac mihi? quam similes gemimus, bone Iuppiter, umbras!
accipe, nate, tui noua libamenta triumphi,
accipe et hoc regimen dextrae frontisque superbae
uincula, quae patri minimum laetanda dedisti.
regem te, regem tristes Eteocleos umbrae
aspiciant.' simul haec dicens crinemque manumque
destruit, accensaque iterat uiolentius ira …

Stat. *Theb.* 12.68–79, 86–93

Thereon the father sacrificed living offerings, Pelasgian captives and bridled horses, solace to the battle-brave. With them the tall fire quivers, and at last the paternal lament breaks forth: "O my son, who if too strong a passion for noble glory had not possessed you, would have ruled Echion's city

20 On Menoeceus, see Ganiban (2007) 136–144 and Bernstein (2008) 171–179.

> along with me and after me, reverend boy, who now embitter my coming joys and the ungrateful office of monarchy: though you dwell in the vault of the High Ones and attend the companies of the gods with your immortal valour (I believe it), for me you will ever be one to weep as well as worship. Let Thebes set up altars and dedicate lofty temples; let only your father have the right to mourn ... And do Oedipus and I now bear an equal lot of sorrow? How like, kind Jupiter, are the shades we mourn! Receive, my son, new offerings for your triumph, receive this that guides the hand and this that binds a proud brow, gifts you gave your father little to his joy. Let the sad shade of Eteocles see you as king, ay, king." Thus saying, he strips his head and hand and, his wrath kindling, speaks again more violently ...

Like Opheltes who becomes the first "sacrificial victim" of the war against Thebes, and the site of whose death becomes a cultic place in Nemea, Menoeceus is announced by his own father as a *numen*, a *flebile numen*: the adjective describes Opheltes on the tombstone erected in Nemea in his honor and commemoration; there we see the baby, now a godhead, crawling before the snake's attack: *hic reptat flebilis infans* (6.245). As Karla Pollmann observes, "the speech [by Creon] must be seen as a performance by a powerful ruler who intends to manipulate the public politically and emotionally rather than as a true and authentic mirroring of his own internal state."[21] Menoeceus receives a funeral, the Argives do not; Menoeceus becomes a king in the Underworld, thus replacing Eteocles' status after death. Creon manipulates religion to suit his own interests: Menoeceus' extravagant burial and apotheosis will be a substitute for all the corpses rotting on the battlefield and the miasma the city incurs on account of the king's prohibition. Moreover, the authorial statement in Book 11 excludes any possibility that Creon acts out of piety: *quid, melior Fortuna, potes! iam flectere patrem / incipit atque datis abolere Menoecea regnis* ("powerful indeed is Fortune when she changes for the better! He now begins to turn aside his father's heart and wipe out Menoeceus after the gift of monarchy," 11.659–660). What drives Creon is a *melior Fortuna*, a thirst for power and the usurpation of the Theban throne, resulting in *abolere Menoecea*, the wiping out of any trace of the son's memory.

Finally, as we see in the second part of Creon's lament above, the new king of Thebes finds himself in competition with Oedipus, even in lamentation (*et nunc Oedipodi par est fortuna doloris / ac mihi?*). Oedipus' portrait as a

21 Pollmann (2004) 115.

father presents the blind former king of Thebes as the epitome of the dark, infernal (another Charon, 11.587–591), manipulative anti-hero: he sets the poem in motion by casting a curse on his sons (1.56–87); he rejoices in the prospect of a decisive duel between Eteocles and Polynices (8.251–253),[22] but finally laments the fratricide in seeming repentance (11.605–631), even seeking to commit suicide on the spot, until Antigone prevents him. Oedipus is too quick to blame the gods for his curse, which allegedly he uttered unaware of the consequences.

> '… quisnam fuit ille deorum,
> qui stetit orantem iuxta praereptaque uerba
> dictauit Fatis? Furor illa et mouit Erinys
> et pater et genetrix et regna oculique cadentes;
> nil ego: per Ditem iuro dulcesque tenebras
> inmeritamque ducem, subeam sic Tartara digna
> morte, nec irata fugiat me Laius umbra.
> ei mihi, quos nexus fratrum, quae uulnera tracto!
> soluite, quaeso, manus infestaque uincula tandem
> diuidite, et medium nunc saltem admittite patrem.'
> talia dequestus paulatim insumpserat iras
> mortis …
>
> Stat. *Theb.* 11.617–628

> "Which of the gods stood beside me as I prayed and caught my words to tell to the Fates? It was madness that caused it and a Fury and my father and mother and throne and falling eyes—I had no part in it. I swear it by Dis and the darkness I love and my blameless guide, so let me enter Tartarus by a worthy death, so let not Laius shun me with angry shade! Alas, what brotherly twinings, what wounds do I touch? Release your hands, I beg, divide at last your angry bonds, and now at least let your father come between you!" So lamenting, he little by little took on death's angers …

By refusing any part in the curse, *nil ego*, Oedipus seeks to exonerate himself, driven by purely egotistical reasons. He dumps the responsibility on to others: *Furor*, *Erinys*, *pater*, *genetrix*, *regna*, *oculi*. In a way, he even wishes to repeat Amphiaraus' descent to the Underworld, when he prays by Dis and

22 On Oedipus in Book 8, see Augoustakis (2016) 165–172.

wants to be admitted in the midst of the fallen brothers, but for what purpose? To unite them or keep them apart forever? Statius undercuts Oedipus' lament, allowing no space for the father's remorse and repent. Oedipus has not really changed; his efforts are solely concentrated in redeeming himself from blame.

And finally, in his altercation with Creon regarding his status in Thebes, Oedipus unleashes his tyrannical behavior once again (*instinctu rabido*):

> horruit instinctu rabido, steteruntque trementes
> ceu uisu praesente genae, seniumque recessit.
> tunc natam baculumque manu dimisit, et irae
> innixus tumido uocem de pectore rumpit:
> 'iamne uacat saeuire, Creon? modo perfida regna
> fortunaeque locum nostrae, miserande, subisti,
> et tibi iam fas est regum calcare ruinas?
> iam tumulis uictos, socios iam moenibus arces?
> macte, potes digne Thebarum sceptra tueri:
> haec tua prima dies ...
> ... habeas Thebana regasque
> moenia, quo Cadmus, quo Laius omine rexit
> quoque ego; sic thalamos, sic pignora fida capessas ...'
> Stat. *Theb.* 11.673–682, 701–703

> Oedipus started in mad excitement, his cheeks stood quivering as though he saw, his old age fell away. Then he thrust aside daughter and staff; leaning upon anger, he lets words burst from his swelling breast: "Have you time for cruelty, Creon? Only just now have you risen to perfidious royalty, my fortune's place, you pitiable being, and already it is your right to trample on the ruin of kings? Already do you bar the vanquished from their tombs, your allies from the walls? Well done! You can worthily maintain the sceptre of Thebes; such is your first day ... Keep the Theban city and rule it with the same omen as Cadmus ruled and Laius and I. May you so marry and get you sons as trusty! ..."

A rejuvenated Oedipus is presented as an incarnation of his former self in Book 1, when he casts the curse. In his speech, Oedipus recycles Adrastus' desperation, in the form of a second curse, as he lets Creon have Thebes for himself: *habeas Thebana regasque / moenia*. The following book brings an end to Creon's rule, as Theseus comes to rid Thebes of the miasma of the dead bodies and its tyrannical ruler. This is Oedipus' last appearance in the poem;

by repeating Adrastus' behavior, Oedipus is also on his way out, leaving Thebes for the wilderness of Mt. Cithaeron and abandoning the poem altogether.

Lament becomes a ploy, therefore, only as an introduction to the agon between Creon and Oedipus, who still compete for the throne of Thebes. In other words, fatherhood is privileged in Statius' narrative to the degree that it sheds light on the violent and tyrannical aspect of male despotism, perhaps in covert and subversive criticism on Statius' part directed towards the despotic and tyrannical Flavian regime of Domitian. Especially Oedipus and Creon are cast as even darker, nefarious characters than their counterparts in Greek tragedy. As such, I submit, lament fails to persuade as a means of expressing the inner turmoil in a parent's psyche. If we consider, for instance, the ending of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and the prohibition of further lament as means of closure (ἀλλ' ἀποπαύετε μηδ' ἐπὶ πλείω / θρῆνον ἐγείρετε, "But now stop, and do raise any more lament," 1777–1778), then Statius' closural technique comes into sharper relief: the reader is invited to visualize the burial while the resounding echoes of lament burst through the air as Statius fails to keep them under control.

By means of conclusion, I would like to look at another example of male lament by another Flavian poet as a juxtaposition to the model offered by Statius: Scipio's grief and lament when he receives the news of the death of his father in Spain in Silius' *Punica* 13:

> forte Dicarchea iuuenis dum sedit in urbe
> Scipio post belli repetens extrema penatis,
> huc tristis lacrimas et funera acerba suorum
> fama tulit. duris quamquam non cedere suetus
> pulsato lacerat uiolenter pectore amictus.
> non comites tenuisse ualent, non ullus honorum
> militiaeue pudor. pietas irata sinistris
> caelicolis furit atque odit solacia luctus.
> iamque dies iterumque dies absumpta querelis:
> uersatur species ante ora oculosque parentum.
> ergo excire parat manis animasque suorum
> adloquioque uirum tantos mulcere dolores.
>
> Sil. 13.385–396

It chanced that young Scipio was then resting in the city of Dicaearchus. Fighting was over, and he was revisiting his home, when rumor brought him bitter tears to shed for the untimely death of his kinsmen. Though it was not his wont to yield to misfortune, he beat his breast now and rent his

> garments in the violence of his grief. No efforts of his friends, no regard for his high station and military command could restrain him: his love raged against the cruelty of the gods and refused all consolation. Day followed day, and was spent by him in lamenting. The faces of his lost kinsmen were ever present before his eyes. Therefore he determined to call up the dead, the spirits of his dear ones, and to soothe his great grief by speech with them.

As Jessica Dietrich points out, Scipio's lament resembles the behavior of several female figures in the poem.[23] Comparing this lament to Pelias' in Valerius' *Argonautica* 1 (709–711) and Creon's in *Thebaid* 12, Dietrich concludes that "Silius does not narrate the implications of his male lamenting figure's violent emotion within the action of the *Punica*, but his Flavian audience would certainly be attuned to the ambiguity of Scipio's role at the end of the Republic."[24] Scipio's grief and lament, however, are immediately followed in Book 13 by his *katabasis* and the revelation of his real father in the figure of Jupiter;[25] when he ascends to the upper world, he is a *laetus … iuuenis* (13.895),[26] the joy having returned as he is reassured concerning the glorious future ahead of him. As such, Scipio's grief and lament find an outlet conducive to the formation of the young man as the emerging hero and savior of Rome, not as the autocrat and tyrannical ruler, soon to perish under the weight of an inefficient model of power.

In my selective analysis,[27] I have placed most of the emphasis on lament associated with death and the grieving parent, demonstrating that whereas women's lament undermines the social structures associated with traditional female roles, as women transgress the boundaries of decorum, male lament confirms and consolidates male power as tyrannical and autocratic: male grief and lamentation becomes a vessel for letting out the darkest side of human predisposition towards despotism, unless the poet intervenes to mark the sharp distinction between his protagonist and other heroes circulating in Flavian Rome at the time.

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23 Dietrich (2005).

24 Dietrich (2005) 87.

25 Spaltenstein (1990) 234: "Sil. a besoin de ce chagrin san mesure pour introduire la catabase de Scipion."

26 Marks (2005) 38.

27 In the monograph in progress, I discuss the significance of male lament in the other Flavian epicists, especially the parallelism between Statius' tyrannical fathers and Valerius' Pelias.

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